

*Robt. Davis*  
THE  
SPIRIT  
OF  
Christianity.



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John D. Smith

TO THE  
KING.

218

As welcome as  
the Argument  
of this Treatise  
is always  
to Your Majesty, and as  
happy as the Author has  
been to please You with his  
managing it, I do not pre-  
sume it yet without a great  
deal of diffidence. It is now  
I fear too copiously Drest to  
be presented to Your Majesty.





TO THE  
KING.

SIR,



S welcom as  
the Argument  
of this Trea-  
tise always is  
to Your Majesty, and as  
happy as the Author has  
been to please You with his  
managing it, I do not Pre-  
sent it yet without a great  
deal of diffidence. 'Tis now  
I fear too courly Drest to

A 3 thrust

*To the King.*

thrust it into the *Presence*.  
I might peradventure with  
as good a Grace make Your  
Majesty a Present of wither'd  
Flowers, or Fruit blown  
down and bruis'd with the  
Fall. But Scriblers are pos-  
sess'd with the Spirit of Pre-  
sumption, and make bold  
with the Names of Princes  
at every turn and to every  
Trifle: with which their  
Goodness has had so long  
patience, that Men offend  
now by Prescription. And I  
perhaps most of all, who sin  
knowingly; and with a  
strong

To the King.

Strong check from the per-  
suasion I have, that the im-  
portunity of officious Im-  
pertinence is not the lightest  
of the many Burdens which  
sit so heavy on Greatness.  
But 'tis mine and all Your  
Subjects comfort, that Your  
Majesty can pardon greater  
Faults: And that he is se-  
cure enough from being ill  
receiv'd, who entertains You  
with *Christianity*, though in  
never so plain a Fashion.  
This comfort has flatter'd  
me into the boldness of  
grati-

To the King.

gratifying my Ambition,  
by owning to all the World  
how much I glory in the  
happines of being H C

Your Majesty's

Most humble, most faithfull

and most dutifull Subject

Walter Kirkham Blount.

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~~blow sht ll gnuwQ vQ~~  
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~~in the~~ **CHAPTERS.**

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ERRATA.

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l. 8. r. coveted to. p. 60. l. 6. r. one  
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r. as we ought. p. 87. l. 18. r. Command.  
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to. l. 20. r. Is it as much. l. 26. r. the  
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l. 17. r. life the.

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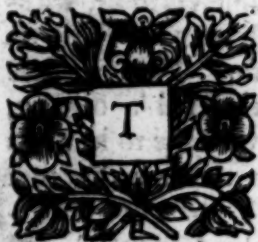
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THE  
SPIRIT  
OF  
CHRISTIANITY.

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CHAP. I.

*In what consists the true Spirit of Christianity.*



He Name of *Christian*,  
a Name sanctified by  
the Lives of the Apo-  
stles, who were the  
first Faithful, and con-  
secrated by the bloud  
of so many Martyrs;  
a Name so divine, that it filled the World  
heretofore with the fame of its glory, is at  
present but as a glimmering light just go-  
ing out, and as a faint shadow of what it  
was in its infancy. 'Tis true, that there

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never

never was, perhaps, so much talk of Christianity as in these latter Times; for every place now rings with the Duties of a Profession so holy; Nothing is in our mouth, but the first Ages, and purity of the Spirit of the Primitive Church: but after all, we may say very justly; there were never so few true Christians as now adays. The looseness, the excess, the corruption of manners in these Times, have so disfigured in our hearts the features of this most sacred Character, that there scarce remains the least sign of it. Fain would we enjoy the honor belonging to this Name, without knowing the price of it; We attribute to our selves this glorious quality, without concern for what's to be done to deserve it; And we vainly boast our selves to be, without so much as knowing by what spirit we ought to be Christians. Thus we lose the advantage of so elevated a dignity, through the little care we take to learn its obligations. 'Tis then to be wisht, that to remedy this evil, a Christian be instructed in the nobleness of his Condition, and holiness of its Duties, by making him comprehend what the Spirit of Christianity is. It is a Design of such importance, that I should have been far enough from undertaking it of my self, had not God inspired

inspired me to do it, as much for my own instruction, as the edification of such as shall take the pains to read this small Treatise.

Although one cannot be a Christian but by Faith: yet one cannot live and act like a Christian but by Charity; since the Spirit of Christianity consists only in Charity. To understand this Truth, we need only consider the Motives of the Incarnation and Passion of *Jesus Christ*, which are the two fundamental Mysteries of Christian Religion. In effect, as we are only Christians by the heavenly alliance of the Son of God with our Nature, and by the inestimable price of his Blood; we degenerate from that Spirit wherein we were conceived, if we partake not in the holy motions of that fervent Charity, which was the principle of these Mysteries. For the Saviour of the World became Man meerly to save Man. In his Incarnation he took on himself our infirmities, only to free us from them. He embraced poverty in his birth, only to enrich us; He suffered death in his Passion, only to give us life; And what is more to be admired, Man was worthy of nothing but his hate, when God gave him such signal testimonies of his love.

Before this ineffable Mystery, We had some Idea of the Greatness, Power, and Majesty of God ; but we had, says *S. Paul*, no manner of knowledge of his Mercy and Goodness. The excess of this love has appeared in the sequel, so much above the wit of Man, that all human reason, as *Salvian* assures us, has not hitherto been well able to justify the disproportion of the price of the death of an innocent Son, which God gave, to redeem guilty Servants. 'Tis true, that from the first step the Son of God made, by his Incarnation, towards the Salvation of Mankind, the whole course of his life appears very opposite to ours. He would be born in poverty and distress, who might have been born in greatness and plenty : to teach us, that he seeks us, not our wealth and treasure ; and that he requires nothing of us, but our selves : He concerns himself with nothing else. He is so far from avoiding our ignominy, that he made himself like us, only to take it upon him ; and divests himself of his Greatness, to cloath himself with our meanness.

But to give us yet greater testimonies of his love, he transforms himself into all shapes that tenderness can inspire, to do us good. Now he is a solicitous Shepherd, running

## of Christianity.

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running after the strayed Sheep, to bring him back to the Flock. Then he is a Father, compassionate of the misery to which debauchery had brought his Son, whom he reclaims, by managing the spirit of the young Man, with all the tenderness in the bowels of a Father. A Traveller is wounded by Thieves on the Road to Jericho, and he becomes a Physician to his Wounds. A Samaritan Woman is desirous to see Jesus, and he charitably sets himself to instruct her, thereby to gain her : and that thirst he would quench, by drinking the Water he demanded from her, is only the figure of a greater thirst and zeal which he had for her salvation. He humbles himself to appear unto *Magdalen*, even like a Gardener ; and to comfort her, he converses familiarly with her in so mean an outside. To be short, he becomes a Traveller with the Disciples going to *Emmaus*, to free them from that doubt and trouble into which their distrust had thrown them.

The Gospel is full of a thousand other testimonies of his bounty towards us. When we flee from him, he follows us ; He calls us, when we forget him : He pressingly urges us, when we will not hear him. When we slight him, he complains

kindly of us: And when we return to him, after having offended him, he seems so sensible, that he takes more pleasure to make his own joy, and that of his whole celestial Court break out at the repentance of one sinner, then at the fidelity and perseverance of a great number of Just; because his glory appears more in pardoning, then punishing. St. *John* thunders forth nothing but threats and terrors to his Hearers, because he speaks in the spirit of *Elise*: *Jesus Christ* says nothing but what is sweet and mild; because he speaks according to his own Maximes, and in his own Spirit, which is that of the law of Grace.

But never did the love of God towards Man appear more, then at his Passion. For that very night, wherein Man conspired his death, this God of goodness thought of nothing but to leave him marks of his mercy and tenderness: And at the same time that one of his Disciples, by the blackest of Treasons, betrayed him to his Enemies to be put to death, he gave his most sacred Body for food for their Souls. He died at last loaded with reproach and ignominy, after having been dragged from Tribunal to Tribunal, forsaken by his own Disciples, and abandoned by all the World. He died a publick and infamous Death,

Death, nailed to a Cross; amidst the Blasphemies of those that put him to death: But he died with a silence, a sweetness, a tranquility, a patience, a peace, and quiet, which astonish his very Executioners. They reproacht him when he was dying, that he could save others, but not himself. Nor was this reproach without reason, because he thought no longer of himself, but only of men. And amidst the horrors of so cruel a Death, plunged in a sea of grief and bitterness, he never open'd his dying eyes, nor turn'd them towards heaven, but to implore the mercy of his Father, even for those that put him to death, saying, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* He shed his Blood, he died for the salvation of the Executioners that crucified him. What excess of love! How incomprehensible to our capacity! S. *Chrysostom* had reason to say, That the greatest testimony *Christ* gave of his Divinity, was the extending his love even to all those who killed him: for, nothing less then God could love at a rate, so much above the reach of Man.

But though the Expressions of that love which the Son of God had for Man, are very observable in divers places of the Old Testament, under the Figures of the Patri-



Patriarchs and Prophets : yet are they nowhere more strong and tender, then in the New Testament, where *Christ* himself speaks of it, as of one of the most essential Points of his Doctrine. So as the whole Morality of the Gospel turns on this Principle, That the true Spirit of Christianity is, to have charity for on's Neighbour. Every thing conspires to settle there this important Maxime, which is the fundamental Point of our Religion. For, though the Evangelists wrote nothing by agreement, and that the Gospel seems to have been publisht, rather upon occasion, then by design : yet since 'tis the Doctrine of their Master they write, we find therein so great a conformity of Sentiments on this Principle of Christian Charity, that it sufficiently appears by their manner of declaring it, there is nothing more essential to Christianity, then the love of our Neighbour. *The whole law*, says St. Matthew, *is comprehended in this precept.* 'Tis the most important of all, says St. Mark. *Jesus Christ* carries it to a higher pitch of perfection, in St. Luke ; where he obliges the faithful, represented by his Apostles, *To love their enemies, to do good for evil, and to pray for their calumniators.* Last of all, St. John, who knew most of his Masters



Masters secrets, and penetrated deepest into his thoughts, places the essential mark of a Christian, in the love of our Neighbour. *By this all men shall know*, says our Saviour by the mouth of this Apostle, *that you are my disciples, if you love one another.* This is the commandment of the law of Grace, whereunto is reduced all the perfection of the New Testament; And the Saviour of the World recommended nothing so earnestly to his Disciples, in the last moments of his life, as Concord and Union: Because this Union was to be the foundation of the Religion he establishd.

The Evangelists do not only speak all according to this Principle; but 'tis apparent the same Spirit makes them speak. They treat their friends and enemies both alike in their History. A God murdered by men, and an innocent man oppressed by calumny, might have afforded their zeal some reason for exaggeration: yet they allow themselves nothing, which has any shew of emotion or violence. They relate the treason of *Judas*, the cruelty of the Executioners, the injustice and violence of the Magistrates, without any touch of bitterness against their persons. They speak in a way, apt to make one believe, they had no concern in what they say. A spirit  
so

so uninterested is without example, and whereof the common sort of men are incapable. 'Tis only Christianity, that is to say, a Discipline wholly coelestial, which can inspire so much moderation.

We see the first fruits of this Spirit in the *Acts of the Apostles*, which is the History of the establishment of Christianity. For, as the Historian relates, the Christians did then live in such a Union, as if they had all one and the same heart, and one and the same soul. The propriety of Goods, which ordinarily causes dissentions amongst men, was no obstacle to this Union; for all their Goods were in common: They brought, and laid at the feet of the Apostles, their Revenues, Rents, Bonds, Contracts, Jewels, and all the Wealth which each one possessed. This disengagement from all things, united them more firmly together: They had but one spirit, because they had but one interest.

The first flames of this love broke out at the death of St. Stephen, who had the glory to lay his life first down for *Jesus Christ*: Stones flew about him from all parts; The Plains eccho'd with the cries of those that encourag'd one another to kill this holy Levite; His face was batter'd with blows, his ribs broken, his breast beaten

beaten through, his breath e'en quite gone, and yet he employed the little strength he had left, in begging Gods pardon for those that had treated him so cruelly: *Lord, says he as he was dying, lay not this sin to their charge.* Thus to forget himself, and employ his last words and sighs, in soliciting God in behalf of a Crime committed upon himself, was to tread the very steps of his Master, and to be wholly possess'd with his spirit; and to have no thoughts but these of tenderness, in the very pangs of so cruel and bitter a death, was to die generously like a Christian. How pure and holy is the Spirit of Christianity, which inspired so much mercy; and of how great instruction to Christians, the sacrifice of this first bloud-shed for the love of *Jesus*!

We see in the progress of the same History, the Apostles animated by this Spirit, to run through the whole World, to preach and teach the Gospel to all Nations: And that neither the most scorching Sands of *Æthiopia*, nor the Desarts of *Africa*, nor the Frosts of *Scythia*, nor the remotest parts of *India*, nor Seas, nor Tempests, nor Rocks, nor Treasons, nor Calumnies, nor contradiction of People, nor opposition of Laws, nor Magistrates,

nor

nor Governors of Provinces, nor all the Power of the World, nor Chains, nor Prisons, nor Gibbets, nor even the most cruel Deaths, were able to withstand their zeal, nor shake the constancy of their hearts. Dangers encourage them, difficulties animate them, and their own weaknesses strengthen them: Because the charity by which they are possesst, renders their own lives inconsiderable, when the salvation of their Neighbour is in question. The truth is, they did miracles, which struck people with admiration. They commanded the Winds, and Tempests, Seasons obeyed them, and even Nature her self in some sort became their Slave: But after all, the greatest of their Miracles, was their Charity. 'Twas also this Charity, which made them with pleasure sacrifice their honor and life, to carry the light of the Gospel to the most remote Nations of the Earth, and draw them out of the profound blindness, wherein they were. This holy Doctrine flew through the World, whilst those that preacht it, were themselves in Chains and Prisons: And nothing perswaded so powerfully the embracing of the Gospel, as the Charity of those that publisht it. Things in themselves incredible were believed, though declared by such as were persecuted by

by the whole World ; because they that told them, did first practise themselves what they taught others ; Nor was it necessary they should Preach at all, says St. *Chrysostom*, because their life was a continual Sermon. 'Tis true, that the Infidels were scandalized at their Persecutions, their Fetters, their Imprisonments, and their Sufferings : But the very Union, in which they lived, was so powerful, that they, who most reviled their Sufferings, submitted to the Gospel.

St. *Paul* likewise inflamed with the same zeal, could not behold the reprobation of the Jews, a People heretofore so cherished by God, without offering up himself in quality of a Victim, and wishing himself anathematized for his Brethren. He, who had so highly protested, that neither Heaven, nor Hell, nor any thing created, should be able to separate him from *Jesus Christ* ; now begs to be separated from him, for the salvation of his People. St. *John*, that beloved Disciple of our Lord, had nothing so deeply engraven in his heart, as this love for his Neighbour. This was the only practice of virtue he preacht to his Disciples, as an abridgment of the whole Law of Grace, as St. *Jerome* assures us. *Love one another*, says he, *my*  
C dear

*dear children, 'tis the only thing I have to tell you, because 'tis the only thing needful to be done.* He of all others speaks most clearly of this Doctrine, because he had the advantage of others, to sound the Sentiments of his Master, by reason of the confidence *Jesus Christ* was pleased to honor him with above his other Apostles.

Throughout the whole course of Ecclesiastical History there are found such eminent tracts of this Spirit, that it seems as if the Christians endeavoured only by Charity to distinguish themselves from Pagans. In their lives there appeared such visible marks of that new fire, which *Christ* came to bring into the World, that Christians were known by their Union: And this fire, wherewith their hearts were full, flam'd with such a light, that it could not be darkned with Calumny, nor extinguish'd by Persecution. It was likewise that voice of Love and Charity, which in preaching of the Gospel, was understood by the fiercest and most barbarous Nations, and afterwards did chiefly contribute to the establishment of Faith. The Heathens said, speaking of the Faithful, They are obliging, charitable, always doing good; therefore they are Christians: for their Belief, their Morality, and their Gospel, is



to love their Neighbour, and do good to every one. They believed this new Religion true, because it commanded one Man to love another, which is the most reasonable and just Command of all others. They became Christians, perceiving in how perfect an Union the Christians lived. Their meekness, goodness, affability, moderation, and inclination to oblige every one, more powerfully moved the Heathens to embrace the Doctrine which professed so well-doing a Vertue, then all they did. And the Faith advanced the faster, by the good opinion people had conceived of his holiness, who was author of so pure a Law: according to the Prayer himself had made to his Father, speaking of the Faithful; *to the end, says he, they may be united in us, and that the world toucht with this Union, may believe that it is you, my Father, who has sent me.* The Union wherein Christians ought to live, is the chief Reason Christ uses to authorize his Mission, and excite peoples Faith.

In effect, this Union was so great in the first Ages, that St. Clement, a Disciple of the Apostles, relates in one of his Epistles, that he had known divers Christians in his time, who themselves became Slaves, to free their Brethren out of Slavery; and

that he had seen others, who in a painful and laborious life, fed with the labours of their Hands those that were in necessity. *St. Justin*, in the Apology he made for Religion, before the Emperors, to give those Princes a great Idea of Christianity, mixes throughout his Discourse, the holy Ordinances which *Jesus Christ* gave the Christians, to be charitable and well-doing; like their heavenly Father, who pours forth his Graces on the good and the bad. *Tertullian*, in the Defence he made of our Religion in the Reign of the Emperor *Severus*, sets forth most admirably well, the great Love and Union among Christians, whereby they gain'd the esteem of the People.

'Tis true, that in the Reign of the Emperor *Vespasian*, the Christians did so often and liberally assist the imprison'd Martyrs with their temporal Goods, that notorious Thieves counterfeited themselves Christians, and cast themselves into Prison, that so they might partake of their succour. A while after the Disorders were so great in *Africa*, that a Bishop of *Cartbage* to remedy them, was necessitated to forbid the Christians to give these Alms, because the Heathens themselves did privately scoff at the Abuses they committed therein.

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But in process of time, these Succours becoming more needful, through the great number of Martyrs, which increased with the Persecution, the Alms were so regulated by St. *Cyprian*, that he took away the abuse, without diminishing the abundance. The same S. *Cyprian* did by his Discourses, so inflame the Charity of the *Carthaginians*, that he gathered a vast sum of Money, and therewith redeemed a great number of Christian Captives, whom the Barbarians had carried into Slavery, when they entred the Confines of *Numidia*.

The Charity of the Christians was more conspicuous under the Emperor *Gallienus*, in the heat of that Civil War, which had almost ruin'd the City of *Alexandria*: as *Eusebius* Bishop of *Cesarea* relates in his History. The reciprocal assistance that Christians gave each other, was the more remarkable, because the City was divided by two Factions, extremely animated against each other. But this spirit of Union was yet more eminent, in that dismal Plague which followed the War, and destroyed that City, before most flourishing: They saw there, says *Eusebius*, the Christians continually about the Dying, and courageously exposing themselves to death, in exhorting them to offer up  
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their lives, in the submission of their heart : And after having received their last sighs with pleasure, they saw them wash, kiss, and bury their Bodies ; Whilst among the Pagans , Neighbour became jealous of Neighbour, Friend distrusted Friend ; they that were nearest related forsook each other in extremity. The Father left the Son, and the tenderest Mothers caused the dead Bodies of their own Children to be cast out of the Windows. In truth, the Christians, that died in the Duties of such fervent Charity, drew so great veneration from all people, that the Church of *Alexandria* registred them among the number of Martyrs, whereof she keeps a publick Festival the last of *February* : And *Eusebius* mentions this Feast in his History.

After all, there is nothing gives so lively a character of the Charity which then flourished among Christians, as what happen'd to St. *Pacomius*. He being yet a Heathen, and having Listd himself into the Troups of the Emperor *Licinius*, after a long and troublesom Journey, arrived at last at *Thebes*. When all the Army came thither, the Christians of that City brought them, with great joy and forwardness, all sort of Refreshments. This made him enquire

enquire who those charitable People were, that came thus thronging to relieve every one? They answer'd him, they were Christians, who profess'd 'twas their duty to do good to all the World. *Metaphrastus* testifies, that *Pacomius* was so toucht with this spirit of well-doing, that he ardently courted to be one of those so holy men, and he obtain'd his desire: for shortly after this accident he obtain'd the Grace of God to become a Christian. *Evagrius* makes an admirable description of that Union wherein the Christians lived at *Thebes*, where the Faith was still in its primitive fervour.

*Eusebius* tells us, in the Life of *Constantine*, that the humility of Christianity had in such manner annihilated in the soul of this Prince that pride, which Sovereignty inspires, that when he became Master of the Empire, he no longer lookt on his Subjects as his Slaves, as the other Emperors had done, but he regarded them as his Brothers, and Fellow-servants of the same Master, and same God that he adored: And he made no other use of his Imperial Purple, then to fortifie his Authority, that he might make holy Ordinances for the ease of his People, and satisfie his great inclination to do good to such as God had put under his Power.

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The Forces of the Emperor *Theodosius* being arrived at *Antioch*, to punish those that had thrown down his Statues, the Hermits of the neighbouring Mountains and Desarts round about, appear'd all at once issuing out of their solitary Dwellings and Caves, to implore clemency of the Emperours Officers, for such as had offend-  
ed. Our Prince (cried out these holy Hermits) *is a Christian, he will have compassion when he shall know our Complaints: and we ought not to suffer you to embroe your Hands in the bloud of our Brethren.* These holy Men, being repulsed by the Soldiers, address'd themselves to the Officers, and obtain'd a delay of the punishment. They immediately put to Sea, and being arrived at *Constantinople*, cast themselves at the Emperours feet, and offered their own Heads to save those that were guilty. The whole Court admired the zeal of so fervent a Charity: And St. *Chrysostom* assures us, that the Emperour having pardon'd their Offence, gain'd more honor by this act of his clemency, then he ever did by the lustre of his Diadem. This great Saint could not cease from praising the Law of *Jesus Christ*, which had been so powerful to suppress the rage of so mighty a Prince, and to inspire him with  
such

such a mild temper, as few, even private, persons are capable of.

'Tis by the fervour of this Spirit too; that so many illustrious Ladies, who in the first Ages were the greatest Ornaments of Christianity, the *Paula's*, the *Marcella's*, the *Albina's*, the *Melania's*, the *Flaccilla's*, the *Paulina's*, did more honor to Religion, then by the nobleness of their Bloud and Birth, or the splendour of their Fortune. The stream of Ecclesiastical History is fill'd with Examples expressing this Character, which then was found in Emperours and private persons, in great and in little, in Men and Women; for in effect, this was the true Spirit of Christianity, which in following Ages was found more or less fervent, according as Religion flourished more or less. True it is, that this Charity never shew'd its self in its full purity, but at its birth: and its brightness appear'd so much the greater at the beginning, as the Grace that encourag'd it was more strong and more abundant: But although it seem, that Christianity is become more weak and faint, as it runs on farther from its Source, through the course of so many Ages; yet from time to time some sparks have shew'd themselves of this divine fire of Charity, which is the soul of it.

In

In these latter Times, as well as in the first Ages, *Paulin's* have been seen selling their own Liberties, to deliver their Brethren from Servitude. There has been found more then once a *John Calabire*, and a *John Almoner*, who have divested themselves of all things, to give all to the Poor. 'Tis read in *St. Anselm*, that *Elphegus* Archbishop of *Canterbury*, who liv'd in the beginning of the eleventh Age, being taken Prisoner by the Enemy, chose rather to die, then consent his Flock should be overcharg'd for the ransom of his life. I say nothing of *St. Bernardin* of *Siena*, nor of *St. Charles*, who so Christian-like expos'd their lives, to assist at their death those infected with the Plague. I do not mention *St. Francis Xaverius*, who left his Country, House and Hopes, to run to the utmost parts of the World after Salvages and Barbarians, to instruct them in the knowledge of *Jesus Christ*.

And amidst the deplorable remifness of the Manners of this Age, how many great Interests, great Honors, great Reputations, great Hopes, have we seen sacrificed in the generous exercise of Christian Charity? How many Persons of Quality, how many eminent Wits, with sublime Talents, how many tender and delicate Ladies, have submit-



submitted themselves most willingly to the pains of a laborious and obscure life, to succour their Neighbours? We have seen in the old Age of Christianity, and in the corruption of this Age, Apostolical Men cross the Seas, to go and instruct Infidels, and bring them into the right way.

To conclude, this Spirit of the Apostles, which God has revived in some measure in these latter Times, and this so fervent zeal for the salvation of Souls, is so apparently the true Spirit of Christianity, and the essential distinction between the Children of the Church and others which are not of it; That though it be above an Age since some of our Neighbours, who have unhappily left the Faith, run into all parts of the World, there to plant Traffick and Commerce, which flourish amongst them: yet there has not yet appear'd any one Pastor of their Communion, that has had the virtue and courage to give his life to Baptize one Salvage, and Convert one Infidel. So true it is, that the disinterestedness and purity of Christian Charity, cannot be so much as counterfeited by Hereticks; who impudently boast themselves to inherit the Faith of the Apostles: when in reality they have not any mark of their Zeal, or sign of their Spirit; since they can behold

## 24 *of Christianity.*

behold without any concern, the People with whom they Traffick continually, in a profound ignorance of things necessary to their salvation. For what means the indifferency of these false Pastors, who, without the least compassion, see the Flock of *Jesus Christ* scattered and straying? What means this so cold tranquility, but what our Lord himself said, That the true Pastor, (whereof himself was the Model) is always ready to give his life for his Flock; and that the mercenary Pastor concerns not himself for the Flock of *Jesus Christ*, because he is an Hireling? Its in Charity then alone consists the true Spirit of Christianity we seek after. She is that precious Jewel of the Gospel, which must be purchased at any rate, to become the truly rich of the new Law. Let us then renounce our Interests and Pleasures, if they are obstacles to our possessing it. But to animate our selves still more to acquire it, let us look into its value, by considering its nature and qualities. Its that must be examined in the following Chapter.

CHAP.



## С Н А Р. II.

*Of the nature and qualities of this  
Charity, in which consists the  
Spirit of Christianity; and the  
Idea of a Christian.*

'TIS natural for Man to love Man ; But 'tis a great vertue to love him for his vertues sake : for love that is founded on honesty, wisdom, good inclination, fidelity, or any other real merit, is a vertue, and 'tis laudable to love these qualities, which are themselves worthy of praise. But after all, thus to love, is to love but like a Heathen : for the Pagans love those that love them, and such as have qualities worthy their love. What is it then to love like a Christian ? 'Tis to love without hearkening to Nature, which wills that we love our like ; 'Tis to love, even without consulting our Reason, which requires that we love what is worthy to be beloved. Nature and Reason do not comprehend this Secret : The Gospel must speak, and 'tis *Jesus Christ* himself must teach it. To love like a Christian, is to love that which has nothing amiable ; 'Tis to have a kindness and tenderness for those that have all unkind-

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ness and rigour for us : In fine, to love like a Christian, is to desire the good of those that wish us nothing but ill.

This Vertue was unknown to the Morals of *Socrates* and *Moses*, to Philosophy and the old Law. The Precept to love our Enemies, is of the new Law ; And this so holy Maxim could not come but out of the School of God, so much 'tis raised above Man. 'Tis indeed *Jesus Christ* is the Author of it, and himself in Person that instructs us : *But I say to you, love your Enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that calumniate, and persecute you.* These are the words of the Saviour of the World : Behold our Belief, our Gospel, our Morality, and the true Character of our Religion. The other marks of a Christian, as Devotion, Penance, Hope in God, Humility, and even Martyrdom it self, may be equivocal marks : 'Tis only the love of our Enemies that is not : 'Tis hereby alone that a Christian can distinguish himself ; and to embrace the Faith, is to embrace the obligation to love the Persecutor, in loving the Persecution.

But how can a man love that which merits his hate, when he has scacre power to love that which deserves to be beloved ?

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What violence must not he use to himself before he gains that Point? He needs not use any; for from the instant that he sincerely becomes a Christian, he loves his Enemies as really as his Friends; And the same Motive that makes a Christian love God, the same also makes him love his Neighbour as a Child of God; for he sees reflect on him a beam of the same light, that makes himself know God. Although his Brother be his Enemy; from the time that he regards him as a Member of *Jesus Christ*, sprinkled with his Blood, fed with his Flesh, enliven'd with his Spirit, destin'd to his Glory; that he professes the same Law and Religion as he do's; that they have both the same Hopes, the same Pretensions, the same Sacraments; and when he considers *Jesus Christ* in his Neighbour, as the motive of his Charity, he loves him: And Flesh, Blood, Nature, Reason, Interest, and Passion, are too weak Considerations to disunite Hearts tied together by so holy an Union; that is to say, by all that is supernatural and divine in Christianity. So, the motive of the love of our Neighbour being the same with the motive of our love of God, as St. Leo teacheth; both the one and the other being grounded on the same principle, and

tending to the same end ; a Christian cannot be failing in the one, without failing in the other ; since the same ray of Faith which enlightens his spirit to know God, ought to enflame his heart to love his Neighbour. For with what sincerity can he boast he loves God whom he do's not see, and not love his Neighbour whom he sees, and who represents to him that same God he boasts that he loves, as the Apostle says ? Behold what's the nature of Christian Charity, that in effect cannot love her Neighbour, but with the same love wherewith she loves God : which made St. *John* say, *That he who has charity is in God, and God in him* : Let us then examine the qualities of this Charity.

The First quality of this Vertue is, that 'tis Universal, and cannot suffer to be bounded in the extent of its love : for it loves the little and the great, the poor and the rich, the wretched and the happy, the peevish and the complaisant, the stranger and the domestick, him that merits to be beloved, and him that deserves not. Wherein 'tis in some sort like God, *who shares his gifts to the worthy and unworthy, and pours forth his light on the just and unjust*. In fine, this Vertue embraces equally the whole World : 'Tis an univer-

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fall spirit, that knows none of those carnal and Heathenish distinctions, of Engagement, Interest, Party, Cabal, of *Paul* and *Cephas*, which divide at present so many petty spirits in the World. For, according to *St. Augustin*, To love all men, and to pretend to except but one, with whom he is not entirely satisfied, and not able to bear with for some particular reasons ; is not to love like a Christian. A Christian has an universal love, because the motive of it is general : the change of Times, Places, and Circumstances, can make no alteration in his love ; he loves in sickness and health, in adversity and prosperity, in affliction and joy, in humiliation and greatness, in dejection and advancement, in poverty and plenty, to be short, he loves in life and in death ; because he is that sincere Friend of whom the Scripture speaks, *who loves at all times*. He fixes his heart on the Persons without regarding the Circumstances, unless it be to love after a more disinterested manner, and when necessity more requires it. Behold the first quality of Christian Charity.

The Second is Sincerity : *Let us love,* says *St. John*, *but let us testify our love by effects, and not by words* : The Character of humane Love consists only in Comple-

ments, Civilities, tender of Services, protestations of Amity, strain'd Complacencies, false Friendships, vain Words, deceitful Promises, and in all other Dissimulations, which are commonly practis'd by those that lead a worldly life. But Christian Charity never counterfeits: she speaks nothing but what she thinks: she thinks nothing but what she feels, she feels nothing but what she would execute: her words never belie her actions, and her actions are always conformable to her Sentiments; for she is essentially sincere, and has no other way to explain her self, but by her deeds.

The Third quality of this Vertue, is Purity of Spirit, and a perfect disinterestedness: for true Charity respects God alone, and studies purely to please him: so as she never acts upon those mean and worldly Considerations of Interest and Vanity, which set men a work: for Men do seldom good to one another, but out of hopes of Interest. 'Tis on these Maxims they would have all the World know when they do their Friend any service; they are only officious to gain repute; and oblige only to publish it: If they are silent, 'tis for some private reason that they see it fit to hold their tongue. Christian Charity has a contrary way of proceeding to this worldly Charity:

Charity: she has no other design or pretension, because her motive is pure. All her study in doing good, is how to conceal her doing it: If she gives Alms, she hides them in the Laps of the Poor, as the Scripture says; she draws a Veil over all her good Deeds, that they may not be known, and she would hide them even from her own self, were it possible, to entrust them only to her modesty and silence. The pleasure she takes in doing good is to her a greater recompence, then all the applauses of Men. As she do's nothing but for God, so she would have no other witness of her actions. He is the sole motive of the good works she do's; and it suffices he knows them, to be himself their recompence.

The other qualities of Charity St. Paul explicates in the admirable Elogy he made of this Vertue to the Corinthians: *Charity* (says this Apostle) *is patient, is benign. Charity envies not, deals not perversly, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeks not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinks not evil, rejoyces not upon iniquity, but rejoyces with the truth, suffers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, hears all things*: These qualities become yet more lustrous in the life of a Christian, which is a continual practise and exercise



of this Vertue. 'Tis good to make hereof some Idea, only to shew what it is in respect to our Neighbours: The lineaments of so admirable a picture, which length of time has almost decay'd, cannot be well traced over again, without gathering thence some profit.

A Christian is altogether an interior Man, who has nothing of the corruptible Man in us, but the outward shape: but there appears so much of moderation and wisdom even in his exterior, and Gods Grace has so powerfully destroy'd his natural inclinations, to sanctifie all his interior, that he is a pattern to other men, because he is more reasonable, and better govern'd then other men. His chief character is the spirit of Equity: And of all Vertues, Justice is that which he most accustoms himself to, because she always serves him to hold the ballance even betwixt himself and his Neighbour. His business is not to raise his fortune, but his perfection, and to help others to make themselves perfect: And his ordinary employment is to instruct, help, protect, and serve his Brethren: but he do's it with so much love, so much zeal, and so much disinterestedness; that there is no man loves himself so well, as a Christian.

Christian loves his Neighbour. His Neighbours interest is more dear to him then his own : and he is less concern'd for his own honour then his Brethrens ; for he counts their advantages among his own, he draws his satisfaction from their pleasures : And by an unparalell'd complacency he transforms himself into their humour, and assumes sometimes even their spirit. He is that universal Man, who, as *St. Paul*, is every thing to every one: He is the comfort of the afflicted, the support of the feeble, the succour of the needy, the refuge of the persecuted, and the counsel of all those that want it. In fine, there is no weakness that he do's not compassionate, and no misery at which his bowels are not moved. He is so far from desiring what he has not, like the generality of men, that he is always ready to give what he has. If modesty appears in his Dress, frugality at his Table, simplicity in his Household-stuff, and good Husbandry throughout ; 'tis but, by his contempt of luxury, to save wherewithal he may provide for the necessity of the Poor, to whom he gives his helping hand in all their wants. His Estate is the Poor's, because their poverty is his.

The sole lustre of Charity shines in every-

ry thing he do's, without any mixture of the least smoke of vanity. His modesty throws out all Sentiments of his own glory, and he knows no other but that of beneficence, and obliging all the world: So that he do's not heap up Wealth to enrich himself, but therewith to do good to others: 'Tis not to be knowing he studies, but to serve those that are not: He has Riches only for the Poor, and Learning for the Ignorant. Nor is it for himself, that he is powerful, wise, understanding, and ready at Business, but only that by these qualities he may be more beneficial to his Neighbour: And he has no sagacity, but the better to discern the spirit of others, and to look on them on the more favourable side. Though amongst the proud he has the simplicity of the Dove, yet amongst the wicked and impious, according to the counsel of the Gospel, he has the prudence of the Serpent. He knows how to make advantage of their defects, and the depravedness of the most corrupted spirits serve him for instructions; for by their weakness he regulates his power.

When he is rais'd in Dignity, and his Deserts have plac'd him above his Brethren, to govern them; Then is he like the good Pastor of the Gospel, who felt  
more

more grief for the straying of one of his Sheep, then joy for being Master of a whole Flock. He always looks on a sinner with a Father-like eye, he bewails him in his disorders, he suffers him with patience, and treats him with mildness, not oppressing him with the weight of his Authority, that is already overwhelm'd with the pressure of his Crime: He is tender-hearted and compassionate even when his Duty obliges him to be harsh and severe. His severities are far more amiable then the caresses of others; for when he punishes, he does not heed so much the punishment of the Offence, as the correction of the Offender. So that in his height in respect of other Men, he is like the Candle in the Gospel, which enlightens the whole House. His carriage is the model of Christian comportment, and his life a publick instruction for all vertuous People.

He first imposes on himself the whole weight of that yoke which he is oblig'd to impose on others; and as zeal in words becomes fruitless, if not supported by that of actions, himself practices by an exemplary life, what he would perswade others. Whatever outrage is done him, cannot make him hate the doer. He understands not returning injury for injury, nor knows  
what

what anger is ; and he is so much master of his resentments, when any injustice is done him, that he finds it far less difficult to forget, then to remember the offence. But nothing shews so much his dominion over his own heart, as the quiet he enjoys in the general agitation and heat which other men discover in their Affairs. His mildness, his patience, his innocence, and his sincerity, are then all the crafts and politicks he uses. His conscience is not only clear in respect of the interests he has to determine with others : but his heart clean in the judgment he makes of them ; for he judges every thing without prejudice : All appears innocent to him, because all he do's is without deceit. In fine, his chief care is to preserve an equality of mind, amidst the inequalities of the Affairs of the World : which concern him no farther, then the connexion they have with the glory of God, or salvation of his Neighbour.

Behold what it is to be a Christian : and not to counterfeit unseasonably the zealot about the carriage of others ; to be very solicitous for their perfection, and careless for ones own ; to trouble ones head for them, and never think of ones self ; to talk of nothing but the primitive Faithful, cite nothing but the ancient Canons, and deplore

## *of Christianity.* 37

deplore the remifness of the Church : Nor is it in the refinements of Discipline and Reformation which found fo big every where, or in thofe intrigues of difsembled Devotion, in which they place the Vertue of this Age, that the Spirit of Christianity confifts. The true Christian is a Man fimple, retired, little in his own eyes, which he keeps always as open and obfervant of his own weakneffes, as closed againft thofe of others. He takes not any notice of his own advantages, he only obferves thofe of his Neighbour : becaufe he has only a contempt for himfelf, and efteem and deference for others. His conduct edifies all the world, and angers no body : He flies all plaufiblenefs even in good works ; becaufe whatever gains credit is dangerous to Man, who is fubject to miftake himfelf : He is no backbiter, nor peevifh ; no Man of artifice, no doer of fhrewd turns. Thus were the Primitive Christians : Nor is this a vain or fruitlefs Idea of a Christian, or his Character that I have drawn : for the Christians lived after this manner in the newnefs of fpirit of the Primitive Church. What, is this Image entirely defaced ? and is this Spirit retir'd wholly from us ? Bleffed Times when they lived thus ! when will you return ? But it is not enough to

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know wherein Christian Charity consists; what its nature and qualities are: if the art how to practise it be unknown.

### CH A P. III.

*Of the true practice of Charity, according to the Spirit of Christianity.*

**T**HERE is no Vertue of a more universal use in Christianity, then Charity: It may be practised on all occasions, for the Poor are found every where; and the detail of miseries, whereunto Man is subject, is of so vast extent, that one may say 'tis of all Conditions. Thus Charity may be exercised to the Rich and Poor, to the contented and discontented, to the happy and unhappy, to the learned and ignorant, to the proud and humble, to the living and dead. So that this Vertue may be practised in publick and private, in the light and in the dark, at home and abroad, in the Court and the Desert, in solitude and Assemblies; and of all Conditions that's most desirable to a Christian wherein he has the best means



to exercise Charity : as of all Talents that's the most advantageous, which is most profitable to ones Neighbour.

The better to dispose ones self to practise this Vertue, he ought to begin with studying the miseries of Man, which are its chiefest object : He ought to search into the bottom of his nothingness, to know the baseness of his beginning, the shamefulness of his birth, the poverty of his nature, the infirmities of his infancy, the passions of his youth, the caducity of his old age : To these ought be added the diseases and illnesses, the pains, the incommodities, the fatigues, the accidents, and other miseries to which his Body is subject. The miseries of his Spirit are still greater ; What ignorance, what blindness, what errors, what doubts, what contradictions in his designs, what præoccupation in his thoughts, what falseness in his judgments ? What shall I say of his levities, inconstancies, irresolutions, frailties, dissimulations, nicenesses, and riots ? There may be added to the heap of his other weaknesses, the discontents and chagrins that devour him, the cares that distract him, the afflictions that oppress him, his own desires that torment him, the great propensity he has to evil, and his inability to do good ; his fre-

quent falls and relapses, the number and enormity of his crimes, his abuse of graces, the irregularity of his conduct, and the general disorder of his whole life. In fine, *S. Augustine* says, Man is nothing but indigency, corruption, and misery. Behold the first ground on which the Charity of a Christian ought to apply his assistance according to the discretion of his zeal, and as his Neighbours necessity requires.

But his first care ought to be directed to the more apparent necessities, and which are obvious of themselves, without his seeking after them. As to give Bread to him that has none, to cloath the naked, to help the sick, and to visit the imprisoned. His superfluities may supply him for these assistances; and he will always have them, if he regulates his vanity, and lives according to the spirit of the Gospel. After all, if he has little, let him give little, if he has much, let him give much, according as *Tobias* advises; for the Riches one has ought to be the measure of his Alms. I need not mention those that voluntarily become poor, professing to imitate the poverty of our Lord: Every one knows what preference they ought to have before others when Alms are distributed; because *Jesus Christ*, to whom they are given,

given, is more remarkable in them than in others.

Besides these visible necessities, which all the world sees, there are divers others that are more concealed, which the shame of those that feel them hides from the knowledge of the most charitable : for there are many, that chuse rather to be miserable, than to declare their miseries. But Charity when industrious, quickly knows how to find out these wants, let them be never so secret, and when faithful to provide for them. St. Paul too, desires a Christian should participate with his Brother in his joy when he is pleased, and in his displeasure when otherwise ; he would have him troubled or quiet, according as his Neighbour is, and that he should share in his Sentiments as well as his Interests. Notwithstanding because there are wants more important than temporal ones, a Christian is also oblig'd to more pressing and essential Duties of Charity ; which are to provide for spiritual necessities : the extent whereof is immense, by reason of the quality of Man's mind ; and Man being subject to so many miseries, a Christian, if he be desirous to live like one, will never want occasions to exercise his Charity. For sometimes he'l be oblig'd by his mildness

and patience, to reduce him that is stray'd, into the way of Vertue; he'l strengthen the weak, he'l stir up the slothful, he'l encourage the fearful, he'l settle the disquiets, of a fleeting and irresolute mind: Then again, by the severity of his Discourse, he'l frighten the obstinate, and by the terror of his threats reclaim the pride of the presumptuous and intractable. Another time, he'l make the humble comprehend to encourage him, that the kingdom of heaven is his inheritance, because he is the true poor of spirit, to whom the Gospel promises it: and he will open the eyes of the afflicted, to make him see plainly that crown promis'd to him, who shall have passed through the trial of tribulation. He'l teach the covetous not to fix his heart on the perishable vain things of this world. He'l instruct the voluptuous how to resist his sensual appetite. He'l overthrow the deceitful peace of the wise worldling, who puts his confidence in the prudence of the flesh. He'l awake him that's doz'd in sin, by the wholsom terrors of Gods judgments: By the solidity of his Discourse he'l destroy the false reasonings of the impious; And by the sincerity and disinterestedness of his carriage silence the libertine, when he shall have the impudence to call,

call him hypocrite and dissembler, according to the unhappy language of this Age, where impiety, to signalize it self, has found the art to confound true Vertue with false, thereby to diminish her credit; because the very example of Vertue becomes troublesom and vexatious to such as live licentiously.

But, when his Brother, who is unjustly oppress'd, shall have his heart overcharg'd with grief, he'l find some means to ease him of this weight, either by the aid of some wholsom counsel, or the mildness of some charitable comfort, that so he may prevent his despair. He'l instruct, even by his example, all that suffer, to submit to the severest dispositions of Providence, and with resignation to suffer those amorous chastisements which the hand of God is pleas'd to inflict. He'l also accustom himself not easily to be shock'd, as many are, at the defects of others; Nay he'l find by using himself to that, 'tis more wit and vertue to comply with them, then to please himself in the good qualities of those he converses with. To be the child of peace in the Gospel, fit to reconcile those whom animosity or hatred imbitter to one another, let him not be rash in his judgments, let him avoid even the shadow of

of the least suspicion, let him never hearken to detraction and calumny; and to secure himself against false impressions, let him never assent to any thing spoken to the disadvantage of others before he has examin'd it, nor condemn any upon the ill construction of his intentions.

When by the Functions of his Charge, or the pure duty of Charity, he is oblig'd to punish; let him remember that the spirit of sweetness and mildness, is the first Character of a Christian, and that severity is a mistaken virtue, otherwise then on the principle of Charity. True Charity is humble and patient even in choler it self, and is tender and mild in severity. If he must admonish and reprehend, let a Christian first know the secret how to sweeten his admonitions, and clear his reprehensions of all that's harsh and vexatious, and let him mix withal those insinuating ways which are necessary to gain him, whom one would not have lost. Let him excuse all but sin, which, once known, is inexcusable. The force and kindness, wherewith our Lord excused *Magdalen* against the reproaches of the Pharisee, ought to instruct us, that in certain occasions, we ought to have kindness to bear with a sinner, and force to defend him.

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But as the World places its Morality in not pardoning, by making Revenge a Vertue ; and the highest pitch of Christian perfection is to love our Enemies : Herein it is a Christian ought most to signalize himself. Philosophy has not yet been able to reach so far, and it is the greatest difficulty in Christianity to practise it. But after that *Jesus Christ* has both by his Doctrine and Example taught us his intentions on that Point, a Christian, who will live like one, ought to lay aside his resentments, and weaknesses, to pardon any injury done him. 'Tis confess'd, the Heathens have own'd some shadow of this Vertue, amidst the darkness of their Morals, and there appears some rough draughts of it, in their most illustrious actions ; but after all, 'twas only out of vanity that they pardoned : Their clemency was only a secret pride, whereby they sought after applause and reputation. On the contrary, Christian clemency flies nothing so much as vanity, and only seeks the interest and advantage of whom she pardons.

Besides this, there is another sort of Charity to be practised ; more perfect then the others, in regard 'tis more pure and disinterested : for it is without hope of any return,



turn ; since it is done for the Dead, by assisting with our Prayers those holy Souls, which suffer in *Purgatory* through those painful inquietudes, and grievous impatencies they have, to see themselves separated from God. These are the Creatures of all the world the most afflicted, through the cruel torments they suffer ; and withal the most worthy to be succour'd : for what are not they worthy of, that are chosen and predestinated by God ? What glory is it for a Christian to be Mediator between God, and these holy Souls, who cease not to love him, though they suffer all the rigor of his Justice, and to adore even his chastisements, and vengeancees ? 'Tis even (if we may so say) to do God himself a pleasure to succour these Souls, because he loves them ; and his Justice is better satisfied with our Prayers, then their Sufferings, because our Prayers are voluntary, and their Sufferings not : And thus the Charity of the Living, eases and sweetens the Pains of the Dead.

But if it be so great a Charity, to help the Souls that are but for some time separated from God ; what will it be then, to be assisting to sinners, who through their criminal engagements, are in danger to be eternally separated from him ? These wretches

wretches do not consider, in how deplorable a condition they are; and that 'tis the greatest madness and blindness to prefer a momentary pleasure before their salvation: how great Charity is it to make them comprehend this? But what patience, sweetness, prudence and great circumspection needs there to effect it? 'Tis a secret, spiritual Directors scarce remember, to intermix a Fatherly connivance and forbearance with these so necessary medicinal rigors, for the cure of a sinner seduced by his ignorance, and abandon'd to his weakness. One must study the disposition, the habitudes, the inclinations of his Penitent, and observe the way of entring into his heart, to exercise there absolutely this charitable severity which cures the Soul. But they seldom give themselves this trouble: this mixture of authority and love, of resolution and compliance, of zeal and patience, of mildness and austerity, are scarce any longer used in Direction; the business is precipitated either by composition, or by a false principle of rigor to be reputed severe; because the World relishes that best. This capacity of a Doctor, this prudence of a Physician, these bowels of a Father, and this disinterestedness of a Minister of *Jesus Christ*, are qualities rarely found

found in one and the same Person, to render him a perfect Director. In chusing one, such as authorize sin by their softness, in flattering a sinner by too much compli-  
ance, and those, who by their severities disproportion'd to the weakness of their Penitents serve only to discourage them, are alike to be avoided; for they are equally dangerous.

I have stuck a little upon this Point: for 'tis in this Christian Charity may be best exercis'd, and wherein generally 'tis least practis'd; because we are not sufficiently toucht with the deplorable condition of a sinner. Although at this day there's more pretending to Direction then ever, yet we scarce see any longer those zealous Directors, who are Christianly obstinate to disarm the anger of God against sinners by the austerity of their lives, and who draw down the graces of God upon their Penitents, by the perseverance of their Prayers and Mortifications. 'Tis to these charitable Directors we owe those great Conversions, which God makes be seen from time to time, as striking rays of his mercy. These are the ordinary fruits wherewith God takes pleasure to bless the voluntary Penances and Mortifications of those vertuous innocent Souls, who in the  
secret

Secret of their hearts deplore the sins of their Brethren: which ought to be a great comfort to those Christians whose Retreat deprives them of the other occasions to exercise Charity. For a *Carthusian*, a *Carmelite*, a Monk the most retired from commerce with Men, may sometimes do as much good at the foot of his Crucifix, in assisting his Neighbour by the invisible help of his Prayers, as the most eloquent Preachers, the most zealous Missioners, and and all those whose Profession engages them to serve the Publick in the direction of Souls. Besides 'tis always less dangerous, and often more profitable, to speak of Men to God in secret Prayer, then to speak of God to Men in the shew and tumult of Preaching.

I say nothing of that eminent Charity practised heretofore by the Apostles in the primitive Times of Grace: which the Saviour of the World prefers before all other Charities; because by a generous contempt of death she willingly offers up her life for the salvation of her Neighbour. I believ'd I even ought not to speak of it, because the exercise of this Charity is above all Rules, and besides 'tis one of those extraordinary graces God only bestows on his favourites: Not but that in these latter

Times some sparks of that sacred fire are seen shining still in Apostolical Men, who travel to the farthest parts of the World, to water those barren and ingrateful Regions with their sweat, and even their blood, to draw down on them the blessings of Heaven, and make Christianity flourish there; but every one do's not partake of these graces, these are the mercies of God, and these mercies are great miracles. Let us adore the designs of God in those to whom he do's these favours; and let us bless him for vouchsafing to cast his eyes on them, to allow them the honor to die for him. Happy he, who in guiding of Souls merits to suffer at least some small persecution, though he be not worthy at the expence of his life to serve this Neighbour! Happy he, who can contribute his tears and sighs to the Conversion of Heathens, when he cannot his blood and life! It ought to be the most ordinary Devotion of all good people to sigh before God, and to offer him vows for the salvation of all men; that the Death of *Jesus Christ* may not be fruitless to them. For the true-Christian ought not to confine the whole extent of his zeal within the narrow circle of his own perfection: he ought to labour for the perfection

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fection and salvation of others. If his Faith be so fervent, and his Prayer so humble and perseverant as it ought to be, for so important a subject; what fruit may he not hope? This every one may practise: and the precious Blood of *Jesus Christ* which (in those Countries where he is not known) loses its value, well deserves that a Christian zealous for his glory should affect so holy and charitable a Devotion.

Behold, throughout the whole Discourse I have made, there's a large way lies open for Christian Charity, to exercise so many different good works as concern it. But there remains one work of Charity for a Christian to practise, so much the worthier to be recommended to him, as nobody is aware to think of it: 'Tis, to pray often to God for the salvation of the Great ones, and for all those, whom Providence abandons to the vanity of worldly Honors, and the covetousness of Riches. Man being always weaker in elevation, and prosperity, then in depression, and adversity; the greater he is, the more worthy of compassion. For Greatness is a Shelf, so much the more dangerous, as its appearance is more deceitful. It is not the vocation of a Christian to be always happy, and

successful: and it often happens that God, through a terrible order of his Providence, gives up these worldly happy ones, to the wandering of their hearts, and, by a secret Judgment, suffers them to fall into a blindness, and obstinacy, which renders them insensible of all the motions of Grace, and all the inspirations of Heaven.

If we have Charity, let us tremble for those that are in so sad a condition; Let us implore Gods mercy upon the misery of those falsely happy ones; Let us give the Potentates of the Earth the same counsel as *Daniel* heretofore gave unto one of the greatest Princes of the World: *To redeem their injustices by deeds of mercy, and to blot out their sins by alms.* Let us endeavour to make Great men understand that God bestows neither Greatness nor Power on them to live in pleasure and delicacies; that their being rais'd to Offices obliges them more strictly to be watchful and laborious; that they have no Power and Authority but to assist more powerfully him that is weak, and deliver him from the oppression of the strong. Let us put them in mind that they are not great in the sight of God, but in as much as they are beneficial and helpful to their Neighbours; that the lustre of temporal Honours,  
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and all these external Greatnesses are but marks of their Servitude, and continual remembrances of their Duties ; That Dignities ought to have no place in Christianity, but more to set off the Christian ; That the Great ones can pretend to Heaven only by their Alms, for they are scarce capable of any other good ; That God, who has no exception of persons, as the Scripture says, will have no respect to their Quality, but only to their good works and their Charity, when they shall appear before his Throne. This is what may in short be said of the practice of this Vertue, whose extent is beyond measure ; But it is not sufficient to know how it ought to be practised, unless we also know what method to observe in the practice of it.

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C H A P. IV.

*In what order Christian Charity ought to be practised.*

AS the whole perfection of Christianity may be said to consist in Charity, so this Vertue ought to be the most regulated of all Christian Vertues, because this is the Rule of all the Duties of a

Christian. So there is nothing so essential to Charity, as order : But there's nothing more difficult then precisely to establish that order wherein Charity ought to be practis'd. For besides that every one, in the exercise of Christian Vertue, frames several Principles to himself according to his own fancy or reason ; and that thence comes the great diversity of ways we meet with in a spiritual Life : Charity besides of her self, in the extent of the divers necessities of our Neighbour, obliges a Christian to so many different Duties, that 'tis difficult to give any exact Rule for distinguishing them justly. This Vertue becomes rash and indiscreet if not govern'd by Prudence : and Charity without this Prudence, which is her principal guide, is not a true Charity. The more fervent the Zeal is, and the more active the Charity, the more she needs this science, which knows, says St. Paul, how to husband its heat. 'Tis for this reason that the Spouse in the *Canticles* gives thanks to her Bridegroom ; *because he had regulated in her the Duties of Charity*. Let us then seek out this Rule so necessary to this Vertue, to distinguish its obligations ; and let us examine the order wherein it must be practis'd : that so the essential Duties may

may not be confounded with those that are not.

The first draught of this order ought to be taken from the Gospel, wherein our Saviour himself has laid the model by his own Example: when he forbid his Disciples to go Preach to the Samaritans and Gentiles, till they had Preach'd first to the Jews; and when he refused that help the Cananean Woman (S. Matthew speaks of) begg'd of him, because she was a stranger, and he would reserve his favours for his own People, like a Pastor who minds only his own Flock. The Apostles did the same: there appears a distinction in their carriage. They Preach'd not to the Gentiles, till the Jews had refused to hear them, according as their Master had order'd them: and notwithstanding the greatness of St. Paul's zeal to announce *Jesus Christ* to the whole World, yet all the motions of that zeal were regulated: He goes not indifferently to all the World; his first care was of the Jews, whereever he found any of them in all his Voyages, and he minded not the Conversion of the Heathens, till he had try'd in vain all ways to gain those People whence he sprang.

This conduct remarks to us in general that there are distinctions to be made in  
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the practice of Charity; where three Difficulties may be found. The First is to know what side to take, when the interest of God and our Neighbour come together. The Second is to separate our own interests from our Neighbours. The Third is in the different interests of our Neighbour to know which to prefer before the other. Behold, methinks the order that Charity prescribes in these encounters, and the Rules that may be given of it.

The First Rule, which regards the order to be observ'd in the Affairs that concern the interest of God and our Neighbour to carry our selves duly between one and the other, is of greatest importance in a spiritual Life. The concurrence of these two interests is often very prejudicial to the zeal of Charity when not back'd with science: for oftentimes we inconsiderately forsake our Neighbour, when we ought to leave God; and we leave God, when we ought to forsake our Neighbour. See then how *St. Augustine* advises us to deport our selves: *The obligation (says he) to love God, in the order of the Precept, ought to precede the obligation to love our Neighbour; but God will have us, in the execution, prefer our Neighbour before him. In effect, It is not reasonable (says this great Saint)*

Saint) that God, who is the Master and ordains all things, should put himself after our Neighbour in the order of Love; This is the First Command he gave Man, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thou shalt love him withal thy heart.* But this same God, though he be Master, yet when our Neighbours good comes in question, remits something of his own right as to its execution. If any coldness has passed between us and our Brethren, wherein our Union may be wounded, and we are at the foot of his Altars to render God the Homage due unto him: He then commands us to interrupt his Worship, and suspend the most holy and august Ceremonies of Religion; to defer till another time the Honors of the Sacrifice we were about to pay him, and first go and reconcile ourselves to our Neighbour. Let them quit, says he, the Worship they are rendering to me, and the Sacrifice they are offering up; because the Union among Brethren is the most agreeable Sacrifice they can offer unto me. He do's even consent that to help the Poor in their greatest miseries we should disfigure his very Altars of their outward Ornaments, which are only of use to move the gross Devotion of carnal People, as *St. Bernard* says; who condemns the vanity,

nity of those that enrich the Temples of God, and abandon the Poor.

What folly (says he) is it to leave the Children of the Church naked, and to adorn the Walls so magnificently with Tapestries and other more precious Ornaments? 'Tis true, the Church may admit Ornaments in her abundance and prosperity: But God commands her to relieve the Poor, who are her Children, when in necessity and publick miseries; because her Treasures and Riches would only serve to shame her, if the Poor were not succour'd therewith. This Rule will appear of a very large extent, to such as take pains to consider it; and the practice of it will be found of much use, when apply'd to the several occasions that may offer themselves. But since God through his signal goodness will have us to love our Neighbour for the love of him: 'tis but just we should so govern this love, that if exteriorly we give our charitable help to our Brethren, at least the intention of our heart, and simple design of our spirit, be all for God: *That we love our Friend in God, and our Enemy for the love of God, which is the right practice of Charity, as St. Gregory teaches it.*

The Second Rule ought to be made use  
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of to distinguish every ones personal interests from those of his Neighbour, to decide what of right belongs to each. The Rule I have settled may serve for that purpose. For if God himself do's often yield his right where our Neighbour is concern'd, I have the greater reason to yield up mine on the like occasions. But because this Rule is not general, but limited to certain Conjunctions, we must seek for another more universal. The Gospel commands me to treat my Neighbour as my self, since he ought to be as dear to me as my self; but it do's not command me to yield to him when our interests shock one another; And in other respects there is a natural equity which teaches me to keep my own, by instructing me to discharge my self of what belongs not to me. There are likewise certain interests of Honor which I ought to defend against my Neighbour who would dishonor me: because Honor is a *Depositum* God has intrusted to me, which ought to be as dear to me as that of my life; and because he would scandalize the World by dishonoring me. But are there any occasions wherein I am oblig'd to abandon mine own interests, and sacrifice them to my Neighbour to defend his Reputation by renouncing my own, and to die to save his life? 'Tis



'Tis evident that Goods purely temporal being of an inferior order to spiritual, when the salvation of our Neighbour is concern'd, which is a spiritual interest, one is oblig'd to abandon his temporal; because the salvation of ones Soul is preferable to all the Goods of the Earth, which are perishable and corruptible. Thus neither Honor nor Wealth ought to be valued when the salvation of a Soul is in question. Now 'tis certain, that a Christian is oblig'd, by the Maxims of that Religion he professes, to relieve his Neighbour in an extream necessity of life, which is a temporal good, not only out of his own superfluities, but even what is necessary for himself. Christian perfection goes yet farther, teaching a Christian that he ought not only to be severe to himself, in tenderness and compassion to his Brother, and deprive himself to accommodate him of what is commodious and necessary to himself, but even to give his liberty, his honor and life, to preserve the life, honor and liberty of his Neighbour. In fine, he ought to do that for him, which the Saviour of the World did for us: for how many have there been, that have imitated *Jesus Christ* in the practice of so generous, so pure, and so disinterested a Charity? But these

these are the wonders of Christian Morality, and greatest Miracles of our Holy Religion. These Examples are rather to be admired, than Rules to be indispensably followed, and Duties of obligation to be practised.

The Third Rule is, the order that ought to be observ'd in the different interests of our Neighbour; that so the impulses of Charity may be followed without mistaking, and that in two wants, either of the same or a different nature, we may know which to prefer. In the order of temporal goods Charity always flies to assist the more urgent wants: for amongst the afflicted, she runs to him that suffers most; and she leaves him again, if his wants be but temporal, to assist him that is in manifest danger of his salvation. Such was heretofore the conduct of the Apostles, who in the infancy of the Church abandon'd the care of temporal necessities to attend to spiritual; in quitting the distribution of Alms to be vacant to preaching the Word of God: because they esteemed the nourishment of the Soul more important than that of the Body. So the care a Christian takes to teach and instruct a poor body is more meritorious before God, than what is bestowed to deliver him from misery: So the

Alms given to convert people to *Jesus Christ* are far preciouſer, then thoſe which are given for their ſubſiſtance; and the ſweats, pains and fatigues of the Miſſioners who go to preach the Word of God to Infidels in the remotest Countries, are of far more value, then the Treasures that are sent thither. The ſovereign perfection of Chriſtian Charity is the fervent zeal of theſe holy Followers of the Apoſtles, who quit all, to ſeek in the moſt ſavage and barbarous Climates the ſtray Sheep, and to ſatiſſie the thirſt and hunger they have for the ſalvation of ſo many abandon'd people, to make them know *Jesus Christ*, and to bring them back to his Flock.

In theſe concurrences of wants, Charity ought to diſpoſe of her help, according to the different degrees of neceſſities ſhe finds. But when the want is equal in two different perſons, It is, ſays St. *Augustine*, either Proximity of Blood, or Alliance, or Friendſhip or Neighbourhood, or Society, or Country, or the Conſiderations of other Ties that muſt regulate the preference of aſſiſtance due to one rather then to another. For although *Jesus Christ* be come into the World to make, by the Sword of Chriſtianity, diviſion betwixt the Fleſh and the Spirit: yet he is not come to deſtroy

stroy the Duties of Bloud; and to dispence with a Christian for what he owes his Relations; because these Duties are grounded on Equity, which is their principal foundation. Thus, what we owe to our Kindred is of a more strict obligation, then that which is due to an unknown Person and a Stranger: So a Pastor is more oblig'd to his Flock, a Superior to those whom God has put under him, a Prince to his own Subjects, then to all others; and in the order of Christian Charity a Friend ought to be more dear then one unknown, a Domestick then a Stranger, and a Christian then an Infidel; and when they are both equally in need, you are oblig'd to help the one before the other. This Morality is founded on Justice and Reason, which orders it thus; and on the conduct of our Lord, who carried himself after this manner between the Jews and Gentiles. St. Paul thus instructs Christians, St. Thomas and all Catholick Divines are of this opinion: For the rest, when the Rules I have establish'd are duly considered, will be found that our Soul, being our Neighbour a thousand times more intimate then our dearest Friends or our nearest Relations, our first obligation is to exercise Charity towards her; which we cannot do

as we ought, but by endeavouring her perfection preferably above all things. For if we neglect her, who will take care of her? And if we give all but our selves to God, is not that to keep our selves the better share? because God will have us our selves, and not what is ours: as St. *Jerome* says.

The conclusion of this Discourse is, that extream necessity in temporals, and the salvation of a Soul in spirituals, ought to have preference in the strictest obligations of a Christian. So that the most laudable and holy of all Charities is to provide for spiritual wants; as to procure assistance for People who are in a deep ignorance of all things relating to their salvation, and without help: But in assisting Aliens and Salvages, must those be forgotten that live in the midst of us, and are in the same wants? can we hearken to what's told us of the miseries of Persons of another World, as one may say, without beholding what we daily see amongst those we know? It is this obliges me to repeat, what I have already said, and which is so important that it cannot be too often repeated: That the greatest Zeal requires the greatest Knowledge: That if Christian Prudence ought to be animated by Charity, Charity ought to be govern'd by Prudence;

Prudence ; and justly to discern the order wherein Charity ought to be practised, nothing more needs to be recommended to a Christian, then what the Apostle recommended to those of the City of Philippi, to whom he Preach'd this Vertue, *That their Charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding :* To be neither indiscreet, nor rash ; because the greatest defect in Charity is want of light, which renders this Vertue subject to an infinity of Illusions. But intirely to purifie its practice, 'tis best to discover the Illusions, that so they may be dissipated.

CHAP. V.

*Of the several Illusions to which the Practice of Charity is subject.*

**A**LL Christian Vertues are in their Practice subject to Illusions, through the false Principles every one establishes to himself in the exercise of Piety ; Sometimes out of conceitedness, and oftneft out of weakness and ignorance. But after all, there is none of them more subject to this then Charity. For as this Vertue has much lustre, 'tis pretended to upon very many

occasions ; chiefly when we think to surprise and dazle Men, as is usual enough : And it is not to be wonder'd at if the Spirit of dissimulation, creeps into the exercise of this Vertue, which is the most pure and sincere of all others ; since the corruption of this Age has so powerfully authoris'd all Artifices and Disguises : In effect Self-love, which always seeks its own interest by so many windings about, cannot better conceal it self then under the veil of Charity. It is through this Artifice it scrupulously sticks to the Duties of Good-manners, to excuse it self from essential Duties ; It seeks conspicuous Charities to avoid obscure ones ; 'Tis zealous where there should be no zeal, and remiss where there should be. Thus the falsely Charitable is uneasie to his own Domesticks whilst he is civil and officious to Strangers ; he grounds a tranquility and satisfaction on the state of his own pretended perfection, and is only froward and disquieted at others perfections ; he is perpetually praising Christianity, and quits nothing of his own Rights ; He gives Alms, and pays not his Debts ; He maliciously praises false Vertues, to take occasion to authorize real Vices ; He justifies his own ill Conduct, only by censuring that of others ;  
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and scattering Flowers over all he would poison, he wounds the Reputation of every one, under the deceitful veil of charitable and respectful Words. But to discover methodically all the Illusions, wherewith the Spirit of Charity is so often perverted, I reduce them to certain Heads, which are as it were their Sources.

Natural Affection is the First, and withal the most ordinary Illusion which creeps into the Spirit of Charity: One loves his Neighbour 'tis true, but 'tis only for the good qualities which render him amiable; one looks on him, but on the most agreeable side, and where he is most pleasing: It is the wit, quality, humour and disposition one considers; and the tenderer one is to all these Considerations of Flesh and Bloud, the more insensible he is to all those of Vertue and Grace. One believes 'tis loving his Neighbour as he ought, and living charitably with him, to speak nothing vexatious to any one, to be very regardful and wary of every ones Interests in particular; to do very general Civilities to all the World by outward demonstrations of Friendship, which all in reality signifie nothing: This is to prophane the sacred Name of Charity, to give it unto actions which are often the motions of  
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a deprav'd Inclination, and the effects of a habit meerly to follow ones Humour. So that to give Alms out of a natural pity, to be officious and obliging for humane respects to love his Friends, his Relations, and Family, because good Breeding enjoyns to live well with all the World; this is but the Charity of a Pagan. The Pagans love those that love them, consider those that consider them, and carry it fair with those that do so with them. 'Tis, if you will, Civility, Good-manners, Inclination, Complacence, Policy, and Prudence, but it is not Charity at all; It is to have too low a conceit of so great a Vertue, to give so holy a Name to that which is but humane and natural. Christian Charity knows not the meaning of all these Distinctions, and these unjust preferings of one before another, which the prudence of the Flesh makes: because a Christian equally considers *Jesus Christ* in all his Brethren, whom he never looks on with an eye purely humane; Faith teaches him that this ignorant Man he instructs, this miserable Wretch he succours, this poor Man to whom he gives Bread, is *Jesus Christ*, who is in the Person of the Necessitous, as a Prince is in the Person of his Ambassador. So that the more one finds himself

himself naturally inclin'd to Compassion, the more he ought to stand upon his guard not to practise Charity so much out of humanity : for as the Apostle says, he exposes himself to reap only a carnal harvest, when he do's not sow in purity of spirit ; And it is but a mistaken Christianity that is founded upon the Principles of so humane and worldly a Charity.

The Second Illusion is of Pride, which, by a secret presumption, and upon the foundation of a very frivolous merit, places all the perfection of Man in a vain Charity. It is upon this ground the Pharisee in the Gospel set himself above others, whose carriage he reprehended ; because he gave great Alms. And although this Illusion may not be common, yet many Christians are found subject to it ; and who upon the Maxims of a deprav'd Morality give liberally their Goods to the Poor, without forsaking the spirit of Injustice by which they possess them ; Their hands are open to Mercy, and their hearts shut to Equity ; They are Envious, Detractors, and Calumniators, upon that misunderstood Principle, That Charity blots out all iniquities, and that it is sufficient to be a good Man to be compassionate of the miseries of our Neighbour. They adorn  
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the out-side with works of superficial Charity, and leave all disorder and corruption within : And what else is this, says St. Gregory, but to give ones Goods to his Neighbour and his Soul up to Sin ; *To sacrifice his Riches to God, and himself to the Devil ?* They even carry this Illusion much farther. For there are of those falsely charitable Persons whose Soul is so perverted, that to do these Works of Mercy which are proper to blot out their Sins, they commit new ones to have wherewithal to do Works of Mercy. They offer to God, what they have taken from Men ; and frame to themselves an extravagant Devotion to give in Charity what by violence they have forc'd from others. How great a Fallacy, to believe that the bitter and envenom'd root of Injustice, is able to produce the sweet and lovely fruit of Charity ! for He, says the Scripture, *that offers sacrifice of poor mens substance, is as he that sacrificeth the son in the presence of his father.* We must imitate *Zachew*, to practise Charity as we ought : He began by restoring what he had taken, to give the remainder to the Poor. In this manner Christian Charity is neither presumptuous nor unjust ; and she is always without Violence, for she is never without humility.

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The Third Illusion is Covetousness, which out of a narrowness of heart and miserableness seeks false reasons, of Family, Children, Pareimony and good Husbandry, to authorize this false Prudence in Men not to dispossess themselves of their Goods by giving them to the Poor. But it is a distrust fit for Pagans to fear falling into want by giving, in the Person of the Needy, to a God whose riches are inexhaustible: for *He that shall give to the poor shall never want the goods of the earth:* as holy Scripture says. Alms, says S. Paul, is a Seed whence cannot be reap'd but a very great Harvest. And as the Husbandman when he sows much, reaps much; So the faithful shall reap a plentiful Harvest when they have given great Alms. The fulness of the Charity of a Christian shall make the fulness of his Recompence. But these are Truths the avaritious Man do's not comprehend, through the shameful fixedness he has to the Goods of this World: He hoards up his Bonds and Money carefully in the bottom of his Chests, whilst he perswades others to be Charitable: He strains for poor Pretences for his not giving when he is ask'd: He remits to his Council all Propositions made him for Charity, to authorize his Avarice,  
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and refuse more methodically what he is unwilling to grant: He do's all he can to excuse his giving, and never gives but in hopes of receiving: His Charity is a meer Traffick: He so strongly blinds himself even in his presumption, that he makes a false vertue of his conduct: He says with a haughty and disdainful ayre, I have no Goods of another bodies, nay I do not desire any; I make use of what God has given me, because he has only bestow'd it on me for my use. This was heretofore the Illusion of that unhappy rich Man, who deny'd himself nothing that he liked. His Expence was magnificent at his Table, in his Train, in his Cloaths, and his whole Family bore the marks of his Vanity and Pride: whilst *Lazarus* dy'd with hunger at his Dore. 'Tis likewise the most common Illusion of Great Men, that their licentiousness makes them covetous and insensible of the miseries of the afflicted. They waste their Estates profusely in criminal Expences, and refuse a poor Man a bit of Bread; So that out of a mean Selfishness they extravagantly squander away those Goods wherewith God had intrusted them to distribute. Hereunto may be added the mistake of those merciless People, who give no Alms but with an ill will and grum-

grumbling : It is not to the Poor they give, it is to their importunities, and to the vexation they feel in being pressed by them. Hence they follow their own humour ; not practise Charity. 'Tis fruitlessly they give, because they give without any fellow-feeling : So as they experience not the sweetness which joys his heart that practises Charity ; but when one is fully persuaded that the Poor represent the Person of *Jesus Christ*, he is always touch'd with their miseries, and never shock'd with being importun'd.

The Fourth is a deceitful Tenderneſs, perpetually ſubject to make it ones own caſe. This Illuſion is common to certain Perſons too ſenſible of Nature, who have no tenderneſs to their Neighbour but out of tenderneſs to themſelves : And duly examining the ground of their pity, they are not compaſſionate of others miseries but out of a weakneſs of mind which makes them fear the like. They do not commonly regard their Neighbour but by the reſemblance to themſelves. They are not ſenſible of others Misfortunes , but through the apprehenſion they have of the condition of their own Nature, expos'd to ſo many accidents and miseries. They perceive not this altogether as it is : It is

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an almost imperceptible Illusion of Self-love; and though it seldom happens, it suffices that it may happen, to oblige a Christian to make some reflection on it, and to disintangle himself from those so humane and self-interested tenderneſſes. Christian Charity is of too pure a nature to ſuffer them; And 'tis not to be ſincerely and Chriſtian-like Charitable to be ſo only out of humour and a meer natural motive.

The Fifth is a falſe Zeal of Religion and Piety, out of which they pretend to reprehend the good actions of others, and find ſomething to ſay againſt all: like the Pharifees of whom *St. Luke* ſpeaks; who were ſcandaliz'd at *Jeſus Chriſt* curing a ſick Man preſented to him, becauſe 'twas on a Feſtival Day; And like that Apoſtate Diſciple who was troubled at the Piety of that holy Woman who pour'd out moſt precious Ointment on our Saviours Feet, pretending it might have been ſold for the relief of the Poor. This likewiſe is a moſt ordinary Illuſion of a falſe Devotion, which often fixes it ſelf to exterior Ceremonies, and neglects the moſt eſſential Duties of Charity; and on certain occaſions tranſgreſſes the moſt ſacred Laws, to ſuſtain indifferently pretended Formalities. It is by this  
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Spirit Men prescribe to others what they do not observe themselves; that they make continual reflections on their Neighbours conduct, and mind not their own; that they are clear-sighted to the least defects of others, and perceive not their own disorders; that they take upon them to give advice to all the World, and smother the dictates of their own Conscience. 'Tis an adhesion to their own sence, and a mistaken Zeal which often reigns amongst the Churchmen themselves; They mention nothing but their Power, they talk of nothing but their Character, and alledge nothing but their Authority; They believe 'twere dishonouring their Function to accommodate themselves charitably to the weakness of those whom God has put under their Charge, and that 'tis remissness to be condescending: Thus they are all fire to make their Ordinances be observ'd, but cool and indifferent for those of the Gospel. They know all the Regulations that lead to destruction, but do not so much as know those that lead to edification; and under pretence to establish the Discipline of the ancient Canons, they abandon oftentimes the true Spirit of the Church, which is a Conduct of sweetness and condescendency. Behold in general the

Spirit of false Zeal which supports it self ordinarily by the bare appearance of Vertue. But it is always easie to distinguish the true from the false : For true Vertue is edified with every thing, and the false takes scandal at all : and as there is no reputation that do's not appear pure to the one ; so there is no carriage, let it be never so irreproachable, but appears defective to the other.

The Sixth is Envy, which cannot behold without trouble the advantage of on's Neighbour ; for she finds her humiliation in the success and prosperity of others. And if sometimes the Envious has sufficient moderation, not to pretend by indirect means to the good of his Brother : yet has he not so much as to hear without emotion the noise his Reputation makes in the world ; He endures his Neighbours good Fortune, but cannot bear the repute of it. This poison, as gross as it is, slips sometimes into the Soul of such as profess Vertue. There are good People, and of a very holy Conversation, who like the Labourers in the Gospel, after having been faithful to their Ministry, in the exercise of Charity, permit themselves to be poison'd with Jealousie : they cannot endure New-comers should share the publick Esteem.

Esteem with them. This is a weakness unworthy a Minister of *Jesus Christ*; because in following so miserable a Conduct, *They often consummate with the flesh, as the Apostle says, what they began with the spirit.*

The Seventh is the Wisdom and Spirit of the World. It is by this Spirit so opposite to that of *Jesus Christ*, that People make profession of Charity, to get acquainted with Persons of Consideration; and deal in good Works, that they may have occasion to deal with those who do them: By this means they insinuate themselves into their Esteems, gain Credit, make Friends, and do their own Business by acting for other Folks. The small Alms which get them admittance into this Society of Charity, help sometimes to compass their secret designs of making their Fortunes. This may serve, if for nothing else, at least to conceal their Humour, and disguise their Character towards compassing their Ends: By this means they give themselves out for what they are not, and may pass for good Men without being concern'd whether they are so or no; This is all their study, and they guide all their Actions by the Maxims of this Pharisical Charity, which is only animated by

the Spirit of the World and Wisdom of the Flesh. 'Tis by the Maxims of this false Charity and a chimerical Zeal, that under pretext of doing more good they aspire to Places they have not, and omit the good they could do in the Place they are in. Nay they artificially endeavour their own Advancement in a more efficacious way, while they seem to rely on Providence; and quietly expect from God what in reality they mean to get only by the secret Intrigues of Men. Thus they change the Principles of Christianity, into those of carnal Morality. If in appearance they have any moderation towards their Neighbours, it is only the better to act a conceal'd Vanity wherewith secretly they satisfy themselves: If they pardon an Injury, it is to expect a better opportunity of Revenge: If they do good, it is out of hopes of a Return. All is reduced to the Maxims of this humane Wisdom, so opposite to the Wisdom of the Gospel. And as by these ways (which tend to God only in appearance) they go farther from him; they wilfully blind themselves in their Errors, to the end not to see the disproportion between what they do, and what they ought to do.

The Eighth is Indiscretion. This breaks  
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the order in which Charity that ought to be laudable and vertuous should be practised, and plays all those irregular Tricks which put this Vertue out of frame. It is by this Illusion that after publick Detractions they make Reparations of Honor more to be fear'd then the Detractions themselves, and which for the most part serve but to open again the Wound they pretend to close. Through this 'tis Men would succour others when they are no longer in a Condition to be assisted: like the rich Glutton, who puts on the Charitable after his death for the salvation of his Brethren, whom he would have advertis'd of their licentiousness; though he had never practis'd Charity during his life. It is through this perversion of Reason some give Alms, and pay not their Debts; visit Prisons, and mind not their domestick Affairs; by their Wills leave the most Christian-like Legacies in the World at their Deaths, and destroy the Peace and Union of their Family; refuse one truly Poor wherewith to draw him out of misery, and without discretion give a Wanderer and a Vagabond wherewith to maintain them in their idleness. They run about the World to Convert People, without thinking to Convert themselves; and sometimes lose themselves in seeking.

seeking too earnestly after those that have stray'd. To this Illusion may be reduced the mistaken Conduct of those Directors, who by indiscreet Rigors pervert the Ways of God in driving sometimes Sinners from their Confessionary Seats, whom his Grace brings thither; and disheartning the weak, for want of capacity and advice to manage them in their weakness. I say nothing of the Indiscretion of those Women who believe themselves Charitable because they do not steal their Neighbours Goods, while they rob them of their Honor by their Calumnies: They care not for folks Purse, but flie at the Reputation of all the World; there's no saving on's self from their Tongues: they examine not a jot all that is said, to have the more right to believe every thing; and there's none talk'd of disadvantageously, but they are presently perswaded all that's said is true. In fine, it is this Spirit of Indiscretion that breaks all the ordinary measures of Charity, and takes from it that discernment of knowledge, without which this Vertue becomes it self inconsiderable: For sometimes it accuses where it ought to excuse; and on other occasions praises where it ought to reprehend: being thus often subject to mistake through Precipitation, and the lightness of Indiscretion...

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The Ninth is the Spirit of Severity: for Severity narrows the Heart, and deprives it of that extent of Soul which is the chief character of Charity. 'Tis from this Principle some believe they ought not to indulge any, because they pardon themselves nothing; and think they have a right to be severe to others, because they are so to themselves. *S. Catherine of Siena* avows she was subject to this fault in her first fervors, out of a false Vertue; and the most vertuous can hardly guard themselves from this weakness: for 'tis natural for a Man to judge of his Neighbour, when he finds himself more perfect then him. The care one has to live irreprochably in the World, gives a pretence of title to reproch every thing in others: and one easily perswades himself he owes none that lenity and indulgence which he refuses to himself. If he speaks 'tis roughly, if he gives his advice 'tis severely, if he reprehends 'tis with impatience and rage. 'Tis ever a bitter zeal and morose ayre, which is seldom other then the effect of a dark and melancholy humour; scarce ever the spirit of Charity: In which respect this Conduct is but a false Severity; for Christian Severity is rigid only to its self, and indulgent to others. This too was the fault of the Pharisee, who blam'd all the rest

rest of Mankind, because, Fasting 'twice a week, he believ'd himself better than them all. Thus 'tis that Men are severe to their Neighbour when they are so to themselves, that they spare none because they favour not themselves, and that they speak ill of all the World because they have a severer Morality than others. And thus Severity becomes a meer Delusion, if founded on any other Principle than Charity. Let us place our Glory then rather in Moderation and Charity, than in the austerity of our Morals. For, *Should we live only on Ashes, says S. Chrysostom, if we have not indulgence, and love for our Neighbour, this austerity would avail us nothing:* And generally Pride, which is the ordinary effect of this Spirit of Severity, is so great an obstacle to Charity, that men ought to stand so much the more on their guard as they find themselves inclinable to Severity. Vertue her self ought to redouble her Distrusts amidst the Applauses she receives; for she becomes a snare as soon as she ceases to be pure. There is nothing so dangerous as Disorder back'd with a false Zeal, as an adhesion to Error hid under the veil of an exemplar Life, and as strict Morality with a licentious Belief. But if Severity be opposite to Charity

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when not founded on Mildness ; Mildness is no less contrary on several occasions, when not supported by Severity : For it runs into a slackning of Order either by a soft Indulgence, or by a timorous Conduct. In effect, Clemency is pernicious where there needs Rigor, and Silence becomes a fault when one should Speak. He prevaricates that holds his Tongue in those occasions where Counsels and Reproofs are absolutely necessary. Judgment and Knowledge, which ought to be the two inseparable companions of Charity, will find a middle path between these two Extreams, to the edification of our Neighbour, the only Mark that Charity should aim at.

The Tenth is Hypocrisie. This is the Illusion of the Pharisees in the Gospel, who affect being scrupulous about Trifles, and at the bottom have no principle of Sincerity or Honesty. They humble their Souls before God by big-look'd Pennances ; and harden their Hearts to the complaints of the Afflicted and sighs of the Poor : They cover their Violences and Injustice with the veil of Devotion and Piety. This is the Disorder that reigns most in this Age, where Disguise sits upon the very Altar : Virtue is scarce any longer practis'd but to  
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get Reputation ; Men only seek to impose : because they mean but to dazle : They renounce that Charity which is of obligation and commanded , to practise that which is only councill'd ; They respect the mighty, to insult over the weak ; They have shameful Condescendencies for Great-ones, and nothing but Rigour and Impiousness for the Mean ; They propose to themselves imaginary Designs of good Works impossible to be effected, and leave those that be very easie and necessary. But this Hypocrisie may be discerned better if taken a pieces : This person so exteriorly moderate, and who through an artificial carriage has the repute of being so reasonable, is a Fury at home ; In publick he's Charitable, and a Backbiter in private ; In Company he speaks well of every one, but spares none at his secret Cabals ; He's affable to those he esteems , but rude to those he disregards ; His Devotions are as regular as can be, and he would pass for a Saint , if he were not so revengeful and so dextrous to satisfy his Resentments where he has any Contests ; None ever offends him without smarting for it ; for he never forgives : So that by this his affected Moderation his Life is a continual Imposture. There are a thousand other  
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Disguises of Charity which may be reduced to this, and which are so much the more odious in the sight of God, as being done under the pretext of Piety. Vice is always criminal; but the most criminal of all is that which is done under the Colour and Veil of Vertue: for Men less suffer themselves to be corrupted by a bare-fac'd Vice, then a masqued Vertue. After all, 'tis in vain to disguise on's self; nothing can be hid from his sight that searches hearts and penetrates to the very bottom of them.

The Eleventh is a Spirit of Empire and Dominion. They are willing to be in at all good Works, provided they may Rule, Direct and Manage: They make one in all Designs and Enterprizes of Charity, out of the sweetness they feel in Governing things with some Authority; and the pleasure there is to exercise that petty Empire which expresses its self in the knowledge of their Neighbours wants, and the distribution of assistance given them. They meet punctually at Assemblies, as so many favourable occasions of shewing themselves; and give their wealth to new Foundations to Reign in them. 'Tis out of this same Spirit that they thrust themselves with such zeal into all manner of Affairs; that they are so earnest to render them-

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selves necessary in them; that they love Negotiating to find out a Temperament in Accommodations and Arbitrations; that they charitably concern themselves in every thing; that they have a Wit fertile enough in Expedients to be of Council for all the World; and that they give so liberal advice upon the Conduct of all Mankind. For this is the Character of the Devotion of these Times; it will be Mistress and Govern all. 'Tis through this same Spirit that Men have no value but for the good Works they do themselves; That they will not abet any good unless themselves do it; and that there are some who cannot endure either Religion should be defended or Vertue protected, but after their way, their lights, and their methods: They condemn all else be it never so good; They have not the least concern for it, because they have no share in it. They set up for Directors without any Vocation or Character: for Direction now adays, as it is ordered, is very comfortable to those that Direct; because they speak with Authority, and find Submission every where. In short, this Spirit of Command is become so much the Spirit of this Age, that it is crept in among Persons consecrated to the Altars; who take on them in all the Functions

Functions of their Ministry a certain ayre of Independance, whilst they hold the rest of the World in Subjection. St. Paul, who had in his hands all the Authority of *Jesus Christ*, is an excellent Pattern for Christian Pastors: for he never made use of all his great Power to destroy, but only to edifie. In effect this absolute Authority is a Conduct too dismal and fierce for Christianity; serving only to make the Yoke of Obedience more burthensom; unless tempered with Love and Charity. True Pastors do themselves more honor in being the Fathers of Souls, then their Lords and Masters; and in loving to Rule their Flocks with sweetness and tenderness, rather then with haughtiness and Commands. *You must, says S. Bernard, Command with humility to Command like a Christian*; And there's nothing prepares the Hearts of Subjects to Submission like the Charity of those they obey.

The Twelfth Illusion is Scandal and Ill-Example. 'Tis through this Illusion Men live disorderly whilst they flatter themselves with fair appearances of a kind of natural Equity, which they would have a horror to transgress: They have at bottom a zeal for Justice, and have none for modesty: They are tender of a Stranger's



Interest, and sacrifice the Innocence of a Domestick, of whom they serve themselves in the secret practices of their Passion: They are touch'd with the Misfortunes of one unknown whom they see oppress'd, and ruine the Conscience of a Friend whom they cause to engage in their Revenge. You are not Violent, you are not Unjust, you hate Oppression, Cruelty displeases you; in brief you wrong no body: And you employ your Wives in shameful Concerns and vicious Intrigues. You are nice even to scruple, in point of Detraction; and have all the affectations of a Prostitute, to seduce Youth that puts it self into your Hands. How many Disorders have you caused by your Scandals, you that have so much aversion for Injustice? for your Example is a Poison that kills him who sees it. But what is become of the Modesty of Christian Ladies in an Age, where nothing is talk'd of but Reformation and Devotion? Was there ever seen so great a licentiousness in Manners as now adays? Women, besides the indecency and immodesty of their Dress, are even come to think it a greater ayre of Quality to dress themselves publickly and before all the World: that is to say, to expose themselves, by a scandalous Mode, to those  
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adulterous Eyes whereof the Apostle speaks; and to Present in the Golden Vessel, like the Whore of *Babylon*, the mortal Draught to those that see them. Scandal is so dreadful a Spring of Corruption, and so pernicious a poison to Innocence; that one cannot have Faith and read, without Trembling, the terrible Menaces of the Son of God to those scandalous Persons who poison the Souls of those with whom they converse. Our Lord seems to have forbidden in the Gospel nothing so strictly as this: *Cut, says he, cut off, pluck out even your very eyes, if your eyes scandalize you.* I say nothing of those fond foolish Mothers, who by their Indulgency and Vanity ruine the Innocency of their young Daughters, in exposing them to Assemblies and dangerous Companies, under pretence of shewing and teaching them the World: I speak not of those envenom'd Tongues that tear in pieces the Honor of their Neighbour, in most obliging and respectful Language, and sow Dissention wherever they come. I only say that a Christian cannot without trembling make reflection on those dreadful words of the Son of God, *Wo to him by whom scandal cometh.*

The Thirteenth is the Spirit of Emulation

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tion and Partiality, principally in matters of Religion: and this is the most dangerous of all Illusions. 'Tis out of this Spirit that Men make use of the holy Name of *Christian Charity*, to heighten their Aversions, and render their Enmities irreconcilable. By this they censure the Conduct of others to authorize their own; They destroy settled Reputation to give themselves more Credit; They frame to themselves a *Chimera* of Religion, to seek a more specious pretext for their Headstrongness, and they give their Passion the name of Zeal and Charity. Such was the Illusion of that *Spanish Lady Lucilla*, mention'd by *S. Augustine*; she was Rich, Devout, and of Quality: and she it was who, suffering her self to be dazzled with Visions of her own Zeal, kindled, by the profusion of her Alms and great Repute, the first sparks of that fire, wherewith the Heresie of the *Donatists* laid waste the Church of *Africa*, and afterwards spread it self over *Spain* and *Italy*. Such likewise was the Extravagancy of that rich Merchant of *Lyons* call'd *Valdo*, who upon a fancy of Reformation foolishly distributed all his Wealth to the Poor; whence sprung that cursed Sect of the *Valdenses*, which since has been the source of other Heresies that have infected *France*.

France. Such in fine was the Illusion of the *Sacramentarians* of the last Age, who taking upon them to be Reformers, fancied a new Morality to draw peoples Eyes upon their Party, and more signalize their Conduct. They spoke of nothing but Sweetness, Christian Integrity, the New Testament and the Gospel. *My Brethren and my Sisters* was the common Language of these Preachers when they spoke to the People. In fine, at the beginning of this Reformation all places eccho'd with the fair and specious Name of Charity and Union : whilst they cut the Throats of Priests, broke down the Altars, writ most invective Libels against the Divines of the *Roman-Catholick* Church, and rendred all Morals ridiculous to establish that which they vented. The Vices of those that declar'd themselves favourers of that Party were Vertues ; The Vertues of those that favour'd them not were accounted Vices : the repute of Vertue and Honesty wholly depended on their breath, and none had any Christianity, if you'l believe them, but in as much as they embrac'd their Judgments, and were their Friends. All this Conduct was defective, because grounded on a false Principle ; And these appearances of Charity

rity whereof they boasted, were but a pure piece of Policy, and a secret Artifice to authorize their Party, and make their Error spread the better.

The Fourteenth is a hidden Vanity that finds its way into almost all Works of Charity: 'Tis so natural to Man to seek himself in all things, even the most holy, that he is so much the more subject to this weakness, as he is exempt from all the rest. It pleases some to Teach, Instruct and Direct, because thereby they get Credit. They love Charities that make a shew, because they would be particularly taken notice of. They find wants at their Doors, and regard them not; and send their Alms to the end of the World, because that makes a greater noise. They pardon an Offence with all the Ceremonies of satisfaction in form, to raise a Trophy of their Moderation. They exercise, out of a false generosity, Liberalities disproportionable to their Condition, and fail their Brother in his necessity. 'Tis often nothing but Vanity that makes those famous Wills wherein Friends are so well consider'd: they merit much by it in the eyes of the World, but nothing in the sight of God: It conduces much to the reputation of him that dies, and avails nothing to the Expiation of his sins, and his

his Justification. At his death, he has given his Goods to his best Friends; It looks very handsom, but it is very Pagan-like; herein he considers Friendship, and regards not Charity. It is not for the love of God that this Lady is Charitable, 'tis only for the love of her self; 'Tis out of this Spirit that she is in at all good Works: Being vain, she is not displeas'd at being thank'd for the good she do's; for she do's it only for that end. Her Charity being but a pretext to her Vanity, she endeavours much more to appear Charitable, then to be so in effect; but wo to them who give Alms to be seen, and so gain the applause of Men: *Eon* (says the Gospel) *they have already receiv'd their reward.* And although an Alms given on this account is profitable to the Receiver, yet is it wholly unprofitable to the Giver: This infectious ayre of Vanity that mixes with it, is in it self alone sufficient to spoil the fruit. Alms, to be Christian, ought to be humble; and done in private, to be profitable to the Doer, *That our heavenly Father, saith S. Matthew, who sees in secret, may give him his recompence.* What in this place the Gospel speaks of Alms, ought to be understood of all Works of Charity; which a Christian ought to do with a pure and sincere intention,

tion, desiring God only for witness: otherwise the worm of Vanity destroys his Works, and renders them unprofitable in the sight of God.

The Fifteenth is a disorderly addictedness to Devotions; which gives to God what is due to our Neighbour. Some neglect their Families to be more assiduous at the foot of the Altar; They wave their Employments to be doing Kindnesses; They love retiredness, when their Condition obliges them to appear in publick; They are silent out of a false modesty, when they should speak; They meditate when they should act; They are in Office, and live like private Persons; They would have peace with God without caring to have it with Men. This Pastor in his Flock, This Superior in his House, are Mild, Peaceable, and Charitable; but they suffer themselves to be govern'd by furious Spirits, whose Passions they espouse: and allgo's topsie-turvie sometimes by their Authority, whilst they are at the feet of their Crucifix to satisfy the gust of Devotion, which some sentiment of Piety, or rather love of Ease gives them unseasonably. They deceive themselves, if they believe they are innocent of the Violences done in their Name; for 'tis only their Name that

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authorizes them. This is to be but the vain Image of a Pastor, says the Prophet; or rather 'tis to be but Charitable in *Idea*, to have the heart to abandon his Flock, to leave the Conduct of it to Pastors foisted in, and to intrust with another the Salvation of those, for whom himself in person is responsible to God. A watchful Superior ought to be like a wise Pilot, who has always his Hand upon the Rudder: every thing alarms him by reason of the concern he takes in the safety of those he conducts. And as they are not in Office but to watch over those they Govern; so all the Vertues, all the Graces, and all the most holy Actions of Superiors are deceitful, when they seek more their satisfaction in Devotion than the peace of those they Govern.

The Sixteenth is Self-love. This Love includes in it self the interest of all other Passions, and almost the universal spring of all other Illusions. 'Tis through this Principle of Self-love that Men sometimes are not in at Practices of Charity, but to manage more dextrously their own Interests: They find hereby their Affairs go much the better; and that sometimes serves to sustain their Rights more boldly, and even more creditably. We see in effect Persons of Quality Charitable, that thorowly

slowly understand Christianity, that instruct others to practice it, and distribute in their Mannors well-order'd Alms to the Poor of the County; but they will not quit any thing of their Interests: 'Tis they advance them sometimes even beyond the bounds of Equity. Fain they would be well at Court with every one: but the *Chimera* of their Birth and Quality is so strong in their Head, that they become insupportable to all the Nobility of their own County; and are so jealous of their Lordships and Rights, that they forget all the care they ought to have of Charity and Edification. This Prelate so set upon his Duty, is inflexible when the Functions of his Ministry are in question: He talks of nothing now but his Power; his great zeal is to exercise his Power in Ecclesiastical Judgments according to the rigor of the Canons, and to hold up even unto the prejudice of Edification, the interest of his Dignity. But after all, the matter well consider'd, ways there are more mild and Christian-like to defend his Rights, than those of Haughtiness and Authority: and ordinarily he makes use of his Authority too much, only to supply his want of merit and conceal his weakness. This Lady has an admirable indifference for all things,  
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but is so wedded to her own Fancy, that she passionately defends all her Sentiments. She is the most moderate Person in the World; but her Moderation leaves her as soon as she finds her Interest in any Affair mixt with those of others. She receives kindly every one except her Creditors: She is humble and modest, but has ridiculous Niceties in point of Reputation. 'Tis this Self-love which is so exact to observe Civility in Works of Charity: 'T would shock her should she not pay her Devoirs to a sick Relation, though little esteem'd; or not to be one at a good Work with her best Friends, least she should appear singular; nor to give to a Box-carrier she esteems and values. In fine, these are but low and self-ended Regards: men act out of meer humane and worldly Considerations; And Christian Charity is rarely practis'd in its purity.

There is an infinity of other Illusions I do not mention, which a little attention to our selves will make us reflection: As to dissemble the Truth, where Charity obliges to declare it, out of a too humane fear of scandal or some other inconvenience; To forbear giving Alms, to avoid the vanity one is subject to in giving them; To scandalize ones Neighbour out of too great

desire to edifie him ; To wound Charity under pretext to practise it ; To give person'd praises to what one would discommend ; To invent subtle Detractions introduc'd with great Commendations , to destroy more methodically those one would ruine ; To mend with artificial Fetches what one would mar ; To comfort a miserable Person, and blast the Credit of one that is happy ; To impose a Yoke on our Neighbour which he cannot bear ; To be ruling others, and to be ones self irregular ; To seek after Infidels to convert them, and not to love our Brethren ; To see evil and not to examine it ; To condemn without being inform'd ; To use for ones peculiar Interest the Talents one has to be useful to his Neighbour ; To draw to ones self, by the Ministry of the Word of God , the Esteem of those one ought to draw to God himself only ; To dissipate ones self, by instructing them ; To impoverish ones self by enriching them with ones Lights ; To be too fond of the success, and pursue it with more inquietude then one ought in the exercise of Charity ; In fine, the very perfectest acts of Charity are but meer Illusions, when they are contrary to the perfection of that State whereunto God has call'd one. As for Example,

ple, If a *Carthusian*, who ought to lead a solitary life, would become a Missioner; or if a *Carmelite* would from his Grate convert the World by the Intrigues of his Direction: for both the one and the other would act therein contrary to their Vocation. But 'tis observable that if Charity be subject to all these Illusions, in respect of its Principle; yet 'tis not subject to any in respect of its object: for when the motive of it is pure, 'tis always *Jesus-Christ* one assists in the Poor and the Afflicted, altho' it be an Imposture that is assisted; because 'tis *Jesus Christ* alone one has in view when he acts like a Christian. After all, examining thorowly these divers sorts of Illusions, one will find they are all but the real disguises of Self-love, which is the ordinarie enemy of Charity.

But 'tis to be fear'd lest, endeavouring to refine Charity overmuch by a too strict observation of these Illusions, the greatest part whereof seldom happen, the exercise of this Vertue be rendred so difficult that its practice be wholly ruin'd: For 'tis easily said: Man is expos'd to so many occasions of Vanity, and to so many Imperfections through the weakness of his Condition, that 'tis to render the use of Charity impossible to pretend he must practise it so purely. It seems:

even that God serves himself of the Imperfections of Man, that the Poor may be relieved ; yet he would not be so, if it depended on so pure a practice of this Vertue. I affirm the Poor are frequently assisted, through the Vanity and other Imperfections of those that succour them : for Man commonly acts as Man, that is to say, very imperfectly : But is that a reason his Eyes should not be open to oblige him to reflect on't ? If God makes use of our Passions as the most ordinary Instruments of his Designs ; If the most secret springs of his Providence for the accomplishment of great Events, are most commonly set on work by the Intrigue of Interest or Ambition of Men ; And if his Wisdom is so wonderful as to draw from those corrupted and envenom'd Sources the purest Draughts of his Glory : 'Tis as much as to say, we must not dare to speak against Passions, and advertise Man of his weakness, because God makes use thereof to Govern the World ; as he do's of the Vanity of great Men to supply the Wants of the mean. For the rest, I shall esteem my self abundantly recompenced for the pains I have taken to clear so home by piecemeal these Illusions, to which Charity is subject ; if it may serve any one to reflect thereon,

thereon, and to practise sometimes this Vertue with more purity: And I hope God will bless the intentions I have had, to endeavour rectifying the use of it, by the simple and disinterested face thereof himself has shewn me. But, when Charity shall be fully cleared from these clouds that obscure it, and from all those impure fogs that corrupt it: we must think of the means to acquire this Vertue, in rooting out whatever is contrary to the purity of its Spirit.

G H A P. VI.

*The Means to acquire Christian Charity.*

**T**Here is no Rule methodically to acquire Christian Charity, which is a supernatural Habit, and a Gift purely from God. But as a Christian, prevented by Grace, may dispose his Mind to Faith, as supernatural as it is, by destroying therein obstinacy, presumption, and adhesion to Error, and that natural propensity that leads to Incredulity: So may he after the same manner dispose himself to attain Charity, if he roots the obstacles of it out of his heart. For this Vertue finds very great



ones in the heart of Man: whereof I will give a touch on the principal; without falling on the same Particulars I mention'd in the Illusions, the most part whereof are also impediments to Charity.

The greatest of all obstacles to Charity is that Worldly Spirit, so opposite to the Spirit of *Jesus Christ*; That Prudence of the Flesh, that Pride of the Age, and all that vain Ostentation which reigns so much in the Courts of Great men: where in Worldly wisdom teaches these abominable Maxims, (*viz.*) To destroy by subtile Artifices ones Neighbour's Reputation; To discredit him in the opinion of such as esteem him; To violate the most holy Rights, turn all things topsie-turvy to attain what one pretends to, and to aggrandize ones self. 'Tis by this same Spirit young Gentlemen are taught that Revenge is a Gentleman's Vertue; and that it is a piece of Cowardise to pardon. The Hatreds, Envies, Jealousies, Intrigues of Excentiousness and Ambition, great Interests, violent Passions, which are the common effects of this Spirit, reigns so powerfully in the Great of this World, that they leave not room for the least spark of Charity. Therefore the Apostle says, *He that will become a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God.*

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There is another Spirit in the World still more opposite to this Vertue; the Spirit of Disguise, Imposture, and Dissembling, whose only end is to mischief our Neighbour. 'Tis this unhappy Policy of the Flesh, which only seeks to establish it self by shameful and wicked Treacheries, and by all the depraved Maxims of the World, I have been speaking of, and which render the Life of a Christian a monstrous Life; that is, full of Passions, Animosities, Knavery and Perfidiousness. These are the Machines Men make use of to perpetuate their Enmities, by everlasting Wranglings, and to make all Tribunals ring with their Injustices and Violences.

Ile say nothing of the Spirit of Obstinacy, Contradiction, diversity of Judgments and Opinions in matters of Religion; nor of all those Factionous Sidings which at present afflict Christianity. The memory of the Disorders they have caused in the last Age, is still fresh enough in this to make us comprehend the importance of it: for there is nothing more capable of dividing the hearts of the People, then different Judgments in Religion.

Being given to Pleasures, to Delights, to dangerous Divertisements, to Gaming, to  
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Riot, and Delicacy, is also a great obstacle to this Spirit of Charity we are in quest of. These stately Houses, proud rich Furnitures, sumptuous Tables, new Fashions in Clothes, which shew nothing but wantonness; These Vanities of worldly Ladies, this State that environs them, these profuse Expences of voluptuous sensual Persons intoxicated with the Delights of the Age, do so forcibly dry up in the hearts of Worldlings this holy Unction of Charity, that there remains not any sign of it in all those who are plunged in Vanity. For how can a Woman that denies nothing to her Pleasure, and loves only her self, be touch'd with any sentiments of Charity? She shuts her Eyes against the poverty of the necessitous, she will not see it, nor so much as take notice of it, that she may not squander the Fund she designs for her Vanity, by the Assistance she should be oblig'd to give him that demands it in Gods name: And hence it is *Jesus Christ* so often shakes with cold, in the Person of the Poor at the Gate of the Rich, without being taken notice of; for he is only busied about himself.

What shall I say of those perpetual Hatreds and inveterate Aversions, which Men so scandalously retain? they can neither  
 speak

ſpeak to, nor ſo much as look on one that hath affronted them; and believe their Reſentment juſt, becauſe they have been injur'd. What is more contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity, which cannot ſo much as ſuffer coldneſs or indifferency? They flatter themſelves too, as they frame their Conſciences in their Hatreds and Averſions; They believe they wiſh no ill to him that has offended them: when any Miſfortune befalls him, they triumph for joy at it: And when they ſay, I wiſh him no ill, but cannot endure to ſee him, nor have to do with him; this they call loving like a Chriſtian.

There is likewiſe I know not what ayre very repugnant to Charity, in the natural advantages of Wit, of Conduct, of Senſe, of Ability; and in the excellency of other Qualities which, if one takes not great care, uſes to inſpire a love and eſteem of oneſelf: For 'tis natural for him that has received more to undervalue him that has received leſs. But whiſt he thinks to diſtinguiſh himſelf from others by theſe Advantages, he corrupts his ſpirit, and in the end becomes utterly inſenſible of the moſt tender motions of Charity. For the reſt, as every one has ſhar'd in the diſtribution of natural or ſupernatural Gifts, according  
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to the measure of Grace; There is no Christian but may take notice of some particular Gift his Brother has received from God, wherewith himself has not been favour'd. Thus *S. Paul* considers in *S. Peter* his Primacy, and again *S. Peter* considers in *S. Paul* the high Wisdom he had received from Heaven. *S. Anthony* only regards in his Brethren those Vertues himself had not, to honor them the more. 'Tis in this manner that the Christian who has wit, esteems one who has Vertue and Goodness. The Learned admires the Dispatch of the Man of Business; The Man of Business praises the Capacity of the Learned. In fine, thus 'tis that Charity makes the Superior not esteem his own Dignity above others, but the Vertue and Merit of those he Commands: And whilst he exteriorly Commands them, he humbles himself interiorly before them; and they on their side respect in him his Power and Authority, and kindly submit to his Conduct.

Lastly it may be said, that the greatest obstacle to Charity, is the Immoderate love of Riches; for this love causes Impurity of Conscience, Hardness of Heart, Independence, Pride, Insolence, Contempt of the Poor, and an entire corruption of Spirit. And as this restless care of preserving  
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his Goods poisons the Soul of the Rich, so Covetousness is the most abominable of all Vices, and most opposite to Charity : For the essential Character of Avarice is a false Prudence of the Flesh ; all whose Designs and Thoughts bound themselves in the Person possessed by it ; so that his Heart is locked up to all Sentiments of pity for the Wants of the Poor. A Man darkens his spirit by the Vapors of so carnal a Passion ; he fixes his Heart to the Goods of the Earth, as to his sovereign Good : If others possess them, he unjustly seizes them ; he covets them criminally, if he cannot get them, and violates what's most sacred in Society to enrich himself mangre his Conscience, against which he shuts his Ear.

But it ought to be observed, that 'tis not so much the Riches inspire this Spirit of Hardness and Injustice, as the fixing too great a love on them : For Job was Charitable in his abundance ; his Wealth was so far from being an obstacle to his Charity, that it was a means for his better practising it. He was, as himself says, *The father of the poor, and protector of the afflicted ; His door was always open to those in necessity, and with the wooll of his sheep he clad the naked ; He was the support of* the



*the widow and fatherless; the traveller was welcom to his house; And he refused nothing to any in want that crav'd his help.*

Besides this good use that ought to be made of Riches according to the example of *Job*, whose life may serve as a pattern to a Christian, to dispose his heart to Charity: He must likewise, to attain this Virtue, have frequent communication with God by Prayer and Meditation. 'Tis chiefly from Prayer these lights take birth in our hearts, which are the most pure springs of Christian Charity and love of our Neighbours. For the same lights that form in our Souls the Spirit of Prayer, form there also the Spirit of Charity. The inward voice of the heart; *That Voice*, says *St. Augustine*, which expresseth self by the sighings of Prayer, is that which enkindles in us the fervour of this Virtue: For Charity becomes cold when the Heart becomes silent, says this great Saint. Thus one cannot be Charitable, without being Devout; because Devotion is the most common nourishment of the love of God and our Neighbour. This love grows cold by the distraction of Business, and is even extinguished by the disquiets of a too busie Life. In effect, the true source of Charity, as

*Tertullian*



*Tertallian* assures us, is renouncing the love of the World, and indifference for temporal Goods: for transitory Goods weaken the Heart, by the confidence they give it in so frail a support as is that of Riches.

Likewise there is nothing more capable to inflame Charity in the Soul of a Christian, then a fervent and lively Faith, animated with a perfect Confidence in God: For the Fire of Charity kindles it self at the Ardors of Faith, which makes a Christian act like a Child of God, and love the Poor as his Brother. In fine, the sure and infallible way to acquire this Vertue, is by little and little to accustom our selves to practise Works of it: For by visiting the Prisoner, comforting the Afflicted, helping the Necessitous, instructing the Ignorant, which are Actions may be done daily, and even ought to be performed if one pretends to Christianity; he becomes insensibly Charitable, and attains that heavenly Wisdom which is the portion of the Humble: and which without Study or Reasoning pours into the Heart that interior Uction of the Spirit of God, which teaches to love our Neighbour. But it is not sufficient to teach a Christian the Means to become Charitable: he must also, to en-

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courage him to become so; he shew'd his obligation to it by the most pressing Motives.

## CHAP. VII.

*Three very powerful Motives to excite a Christian to acquire the Vertue of Charity.*

**T**HE first Motive is, That without being Charitable one cannot be a Christian; for it is in Charity alone consists the true Spirit of Christianity. Nature teaches Man to live with Man, but Grace obliges to love him. *This is, says S. Paul, the plenitude of the Law of the New Testament.* All the Morality of *Jesus Christ*, and all the depth of the Wisdom of the Gospel points only at the practice of this Vertue, which alone is the sum and substance of Christian Perfection. *Without Charity, says the Apostle, neither Faith, nor Hope, nor the gifts of Prophecy, nor the gifts of Tongues, nor Martyrdom, nor any other Vertue, can be considerable in the sight of God.* It is Charity perfects Man, rectifies his Reason, and sanctifies all his Actions.

**Actions.** This makes humble, and un-  
makes proud: because it nourishes Humility,  
and choaks Pride. All Vertues become un-  
profitable, and all good Works fruitless to  
him that is not Charitable. 'Tis Charity  
that warms the Faithful, that animates his  
Hopes, and that justifies a Sinner. One  
may enter into the Marriage-Chamber of  
the *Lamb* without Virginity, but not with-  
out Charity. The ordinary life of a Chri-  
stian in the exercise of a faithful and per-  
severant Charity, may sometimes be as  
meritorious in the sight of God, as the  
most heroick Conflicts of the Martyrs;  
because every Action of Charity, by the  
nature of its Motive, is a secret Sacrifice  
of his Interest or of his Pleasure, and even  
of his Honor: for one cannot in effect love  
his Neighbour like a Christian, without  
depriving himself of something either in-  
commodiously, or against his Inclination;  
And all the best we do is ordinarily good  
for nothing, but by the influence of this  
Vertue. It is only through Charity that  
the Works of Piety are Christian: This  
enobles the meanest Actions; and the  
weakest Reasonings become strong, when  
a little sustain'd by it: and 'tis not the  
greatness of the things done for God that  
renders them considerable, but the great-

ness of the Charity wherewith they are done. In brief, this heavenly Vertue, which is the purest food of the Soul, sanctifies even natural Defects and the grossest Imperfections; and covers that multitude of Sins whereunto Man is subject through the weakness of his Condition, as the Apostle says. Let us then seek after no other Practice of Devotion, since this alone contains all other Practices, as *St. John* instructs us; let us not strain our Wits, according to the Spirit of this Age, with vain Reasonings, in quest of new ways to arrive at Perfection: Let us content our selves with this the Saviour of the World has marked out to us; let us set our heart on this Vertue he most recommends to us; let us not stifle in our selves this divine fire whereof Faith kindles the first flames in our hearts. Let us love our Brethren sincerely, since we live on the same Bread, and have all the same Hopes. If we cannot contribute our Goods towards succouring the Poor, at least let us sigh to God for him; and thereby in some manner comfort him what we can for the shame he undergoes to sigh so often to Men, imploring their assistance. In fine, let us not by our hard-heartedness dishonor the holy Name of *Christian*, a Name of sweetness and

and bounty; and since without being Charitable one cannot be a Christian, let us be Charitable in effect, not to be only Christians in *idea*. The reciprocal need Men have of one another, is the foundation of their Society, and the natural principle of their Union; And shall not Charity be a bond strong enough to unite Christians by the reciprocal obligations they have to assist each other? for the Rich ought to help the Poor before Men, as the Poor help the Rich before God; in that the misery of the one, becomes the fountain of the others merit and happiness.

The Second Motive to acquire Charity, is the pain wherewith God so severely punishes him that is not provided with this Virtue. In effect, as it is to break the Alliance of the New Testament, and after a manner renounce the Gospel, not to love ones Neighbour; there is nothing more terrible then these Punishments wherewith the holy Scriptures threatens them that have not this love. *And is it not just*, saith S. Chrysostom, *that he who does no kindness, should receive none?* But how dreadful a Judgment does the Saviour of the World pronounce against those Scribes whereof St. Mark speaks, who devour with such injustice and violence the Goods of Wi-

dows? What Maledictions against those  
 cruel and merciless Pharisees whereof  
 St. *Matthew* speaks? Virginity, how  
 > pleasing soever to God, through the lustre  
 of its purity, is a Vertue reproved in the  
 Gospel, when sever'd from Charity. The  
 foolish Virgins, far from being received at  
 the Nuptials of the *Lamb*, were treated as  
 impudent Women; because they took no  
 care to make that provision of this Oyl of  
 the Gospel, which is the figure of Charity.  
 In vain they renounced Pleasure, to em-  
 brace Chastity; all their Vertues avail  
 them nothing to justify them to the Bride-  
 groom, who spake to them these words  
 full of contempt, *I know you not*. Oh  
 if true Virgins are treated so severely by  
 the Son of God: if the wisdom of their  
 Conduct, if the command over their De-  
 sires, if the purity of their Heart, if so many  
 victories obtain'd over so frail flesh and  
 so weak a Sex; In fine, if even the perse-  
 verance of their Vertue is fruitless to them:  
 What will become of those Virgins that  
 lead such licentious and scandalous lives?  
 But with what sharpness do's *Jesus Christ*  
 condemn his own Disciples, because they  
 advis'd him, through want of Charity, to  
 make fire fall from Heaven upon the *Sa-*  
*maritans* that would not receive him? You  
 know

know not, said he, of what spirit you are, and how far 'tis contrary to mine. Is not the punishment of the wicked rich man in the Gospel a most dreadful Example? and the Treatment he receiv'd, is it not terrible? After all, what Crime had he committed? he had not been Charitable; *The hardness of his heart, says St. Chrysostom, was the cause of his loss.* But O my God, how severe and dreadful a Judge art thou! for this rich man had done wrong to none: he made use of the Riches thou hadst bestowed upon him, without doing any Violence or Injustice. 'Tis true, but the superfluities of his Table, the sumptuousness of his House, his Oppulency, as innocent as it is, cry for Vengeance before God; because he employ'd not his Goods to relieve the Necessaries of the Poor. Look then to your selves you Great ones of the Earth; If prosperity be in your Houses, if you live at ease, if all things succeed to your desires, Tremble amidst these temporal Blessings: All your good Fortune is only a mark of your Reprobation; unless you are Charitable. Power, Riches, Honours, you are but impediments to Salvation, if you be not employ'd in assisting the Poor, and protecting him that is in oppression. For if  
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the Rich could love the Poor, he would be saved ; and his Riches which are true evils, would become true goods. But can one hear without terror those threatening words of the Gospel, capable of themselves alone to make tremble the Great ones that live in all abundance. *Woe to you rich of the earth !* And why ? Because God, who is just, abandons the Rich to their own Apperites, and strikes them with an inward blindness, which makes them insensible of all the motions of Grace, and all the lights of Heaven. This false Tranquility, and dangerous Peace they enjoy, is sometimes one of the most terrible torments wherewith God punishes their hard-heartedness ; and 'tis an assured sign he leaves them to impenitency. But how great will be the confusion and astonishment of the Reprobate, when he shall appear before the dreadful Tribunal of the last Judgment ; to hear this terrible Sentence, which an offended God shall pronounce in the fury of his rage and indignation ? *Away from me you cursed into fire everlasting : for I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat ; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink ; I was naked, and you cloathed me not.* O cruel torments, for a Soul to see herself eternally depriv'd of God, and abandon'd

don'd to her own despair ; because being Christian she was not Charitable. It is not of Impudicity, Envy, Choler, Violence or Blasphemy, God speaks in his last Judgment to condemn these Crimes ; he only speaks of Insensibility towards the Poor ; And *Judgment without mercy to him that shews not mercy*, as the Apostle assures us. It is thus those merciless Souls shall be treated that have not been moved with the miseries of their Brethren. But can any one bear in mind the thoughts of this dreadful Tribunal, and not be Charitable ? And what hope can he have of the mercy of God, when himself has pity on none ? 'Tis a sign one has no Faith when he is not seiz'd with horror at such terrible Menaces, and that would make one tremble when seriously consider'd : for the Threats of a God are never in vain ; and he is as dreadful in his Judgments, as he is amiable in his Mercies.

If yet there be any found insensible of these Reasons, because their Effects are at a distance ; let him at least consider after what manner God exercises his Judgments in this Life on such Christians as have not Charity : let him tremble at reading in the *Apocalyps* the thundering Menaces wherewith that dreadful Judge

Judge who carries a sharp Sword in his Mouth, and holds Death fetter'd in Irons, strikes those first Pastors of the Churches of *Asia*, because their Charity, the Seal as it were of their Character and Spirit of their Vocation, was grown cold. Let him behold with trembling the terrible Punishment of that unhappy *Saprice* mention'd by *Metaphrastus*: who after the Rigors of a severe Prison, after the Conflicts he had resolutely sustain'd before his Judge in defence of his Faith, lost his Crown at the very point of receiving it, and of a Martyr became an Apostate and a Pagan; because he would not forgive his Brother an Injury. What shall I say of those fearful pains wherewith God punishes in this Life; the shameful attatch the Rich have to the Goods of the Earth; delivering them up a prey to their Appetites, and leaving them in an utter forgetfulness of their Salvation? For a rich Man, says *S. Basil*, by locking up the bowels of Charity against his Neighbour, at the same time shuts those of Gods Mercy against himself; and by treating so coldly Jesus Christ in the Person of the Poor, shews by his hard-heartedness that he fears not to have him for his Judge, whom he would not acknowledge for his Brother. It is a Heart perfectly hardened that

that, being no longer touch'd with any apprehension of fear, rebels under the Rod, shuts his Ear against the checks of his Conscience, and his Eyes against the light of his Reason; and becomes insensible of the motions of Humanity. 'Tis the most rigorous pain wherewith God chastises the rich Man that dies in abundance, and leaves vast Wealth to his often unknown Heirs, without giving any share to the Poor: He thinks not on't, because God gives him not the Grace. He might obtain mercy by giving in Alms, at least when he's dying, what Death will soon snatch from him: But this is a Reflection a rich Man is not worthy of; God abandons him to blindness and insensibility at his Death, in punishment of his hard-heartedness during his Life; to make him feel all the weight of his Justice, that regarded not his Mercy, which he slighted in slighting the Poor.

'Tis from this insolent contempt that there arise so many Disorders in Families; hence comes the Ruine of Houses, the Losses, the publick Defamations, and all the shameful Faults of particular Persons. The Providence of God permits to fall into these Misfortunes, those who whilst they made profession of Christianity, had not  
any

any sentiment of love or tenderness for their Neighbour; and were Christians, but had not the Spirit or Character of a Christian. But if the greatness of the Threats of the Son of God is able to frighten us, the greatness of his Recompences ought to have much more power over our Hearts to touch them.

This is the Third Motive. In so short a Treatise as I propos'd to my self, it would be difficult to comprehend all the Rewards God has promis'd to Charity; the Scripture is full of them. 'Tis to this Vertue God has promis'd an unconcern for temporal Goods, firmness of Faith, purity of Manners, the comfort of a good Conscience, tenderness of Devotion, unshakable perseverance in Vertue, and the infallible recompence of Salvation. God engages himself to pardon every thing in consideration of Charity; for it is the ordinary propitiation of Sin. One Alms, one action of Clemency, the pardon of one Injury, one work of Mercy, is able to hide all the Faults that humane frailty can make us commit: Nothing purifies so much the Conscience, nothing cleanses more the Mind, then Alms-deeds. How many simple and humble Persons have render'd themselves worthy to penetrate the Myste-  
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ries of the holy Scriptures, and enter into the Secrets of God by the light of their Charity ? It is a sure protection against the frailty of Man, and against the occasions of offending God : since it resists Sin, as the Scripture says. *It is, saith St. Ambrose, the remedy against all Disorders Man is subject to.* This is of all other the most powerful Mediatour to *Jesus Christ* ; for it continually solicits this severe Judge, who is inflexible to all but Alms. This poor Man whom you have Clothed, this sick Man you have Visited, this innocent Creature to whom you have given your protection, and this afflicted Soul whom you have comforted, is *Jesus Christ* : For since *Jesus Christ* has told us that we do to him what we do to the least of his Servants ; *There is no difference, says St. Chrysostom, between giving to the Poor, and giving to Jesus Christ.* If then the Poor are Advocates to God, if their Intercession is the most assur'd assistance the Rich can expect from their Riches in that dreadful Day of the universal Judgment ; place your hopes in this Treasure of Gods Mercies, where neither Thieves nor Corruption can have access. Nay be assur'd that 'tis your Charity which will draw upon you the assistance of Heaven in your temporal Occasi-

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ons,

ons, and in the afflicting Tribulations whereto the misery of our Condition is so subject. For if you are Charitable, God will be faithful to the Promises he has made in his Prophet, *You shall no sooner open your mouth to call him to your aid, then he will answer, Here I am.*

But what blindness is it in a Christian to have it in his power to merit Heaven by a Glass of Water, or a Morsel of Bread given to a poor Man out of the motive of Christian Charity; and to refuse it him? With what face can he beg pardon of God daily, if himself pardons not? Would you have others take pity on you? take pity on others. Do you crave Favours? do them your self. Do not judge, if you will not be judged; for as you treat your Neighbour, your self shall also be treated. After all, what Recompence can move a Christians Heart, if Heaven cannot, that comprehends in it self alone all Rewards; and is only promis'd to the Charitable? For the Gospel teaches us that the Saviour of the, World in that terrible Day wherein he shall Judge the Universe, will shew mercy only to those that have been merciful: since in opening the Heavens to his Elect he will say to them these words, *You who have clothed and fed me in the person of the Poor,*



*Poor, come receive an eternal reward which I have prepar'd for your mercies.* Behold, what the price is of Christian Charity: it merits an eternal recompence by a piece of Bread given to a poor Man for the love of *Jesus Christ*; it gains heavenly Goods by earthly ones, and for perishable Riches receives those will never perish. Behold what Vertue the Spirit of Christianity has in it to produce the solid fruits of Eternity, by mean, weak, and slight Works: For how many Christians are there that sanctifie a Life, in other respects but ordinary, nay sometimes imperfect, by the sole exercise of Charity? How many Souls have been rais'd to a sublime perfection by the only practice of this Vertue, which includes in it self all the perfection of Christianity?

These are Motives capable to make impression on a Heart that is prevented by the light of Faith, and is really touch'd with the hopes of what our Religion proposes to us. But since we are in an Age wherein Christian Charity is much cool'd by the nicety of so many new Interests brought into the World, which divide Mens minds: let us endeavour to reinforce the heat of this Vertue by Considerations still more pressing, being its practice is so necessary.

## C H A P. VIII.

*The Conclusion of this Discourse by way of Exhortation, to move Christians to Charity.*

**I**F the Spirit of Christianity be nothing else but the Spirit of Charity, as it appears by this Discourse; let us see if we are Charitable, to judge whether we are Christians. For the Law of Charity is the Law of the New Testament written in the bottom of our hearts, by the Impression of the Holy Ghost: So that it would be strange that Christians instructed in a School of Unity, modell'd by the same Maxims, redeemed with the same Blood, fed with the same Bread; that have the same Faith, the same Hope, and are one day to be reunited in the same Glory, should not have the same Spirit, and love one another. But after all how go's it? have we Charity one for another? The Luxury, Self-interest, Ambition, and general Irregularities of the Manners of this Age, have they not spread every where the Spirit of Division? and what judgment ought one to make of the Christianity of these later Times, wherein Animosities, Jealousies,  
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Law-Suits, Quarrels, Envies, Calumnies, Repinings, Injustices, and Revenge, reign with so much heat? Were there ever seen so many Divisions in Families, so many Separations in Marriages, such Coldness and Indifferency among Relations, so little Union in Communities, and so many different Opinions in Religion? Men have no Charity for those they know, how then can they have any for them they know not? They love not their Kindred, how then can they love others? They are rigid to their Domesticks, and can they have any tenderness for Strangers? Never did Luxury more reign in the World, and perhaps the Poor were never less assisted. Are we Christians with such languishing Manners? Those later Times when Men shall hate one another, and the Charity of the Faithful grow so cold: Those Times I say foretold by our Lord, are they already come?

However, let us tremble, if we have not Charity: For without it all our hopes are vain; and we are degenerated from the Spirit of the first Christians, who generously renouncing all the Goods of the Earth, only rais'd their Minds to Heaven, and made the purity of their Faith shine to the whole World by the ardor of their Charity. Let us then not stray out of the

sure way of Salvation which they have marked out to us by the exercise of this Vertue, they have practis'd with so much perseverance and fidelity : Let us not stifle in our selves the sentiments of that Spirit, which our Christianity gives birth to: Let us examine our selves, and see if we have that Seal of our Predestination so distinctly shew'd us in the Gospel: Let us be afraid of losing the features of this divine Character, for fear we lose at the same time the marks and surest pledge of our Salvation : Let us be touch'd with compassion for our Brethren, that God may be touch'd with compassion for us : Let us assist them in their wants, that God may assist us in ours : Let us be merciful to them, that he may be so to us : Let us not judge them, for our Judgments must one day be judged ; or if we judge them, let it be without condemning them, that we be not condemned ; for we shall be judged in the same manner we judge : Let us not hope God will stretch out to us his helping hand, if we refuse help to the Afflicted that ask it. What pride would it be to behold with ungrateful Eyes *Jesus Christ* pouring forth his precious Blood upon the Cross for us ; and to deny him a bit of Bread which he begs of us by the mouth of the Poor : And what unhappiness

ness for us, should these Riches that give us nothing but inquietude, and which we must one day quit, become an obstacle to our Salvation; God having given them us only by their means to save us? How happy is he who, to make a good use of them, abandons the love of his Treasures, to reserve for himself none but those of the Riches of Gods mercy at the day of his wrath.

But the Justice of this dreadful Judge has Secrets and Abysses impenetrable to our understanding: His Grace is not for the Rich or Great ones of the Earth, who, through monstrous hardness of heart, are become so insensible of the motions of pity, that they see the miseries of the Afflicted without the least compassion. Alas, if this poor wretch that carries sorrow in his Face; this poor wretch that is your Brother; in fine, this poor wretch that represents *Jesus Christ* in person cannot move you: what can? If you have been so cruel to shut up your bowels against his wants: how can you have the confidence of the truly faithful, who place all their hopes in the bowels of their Saviour; whence flow those Springs of mercy which are the sanctuary of Sinners? With what assurance will you appear before the Sovereign Tribunal of the last Judgment, to render an account of  
your

your Life to that inflexible Judge, who will give to every one according to his works; if you have been hard and pitiless to all the world? But alas, how frightful will it be to hear those terrible words of the Gospel, *Go you accursed*, and what follows; after having neglected to clothe *Jesus Christ* when he was naked, to feed him when he was hungry in those Members whereof he is Head? He must be very blind, to think himself secure against the Sentence of so severe a Judge that sees all things, when one has so contemn'd him in the person of his Brethren.

But it is a dreadful heedlessness, and dismal blindness to which God uses to abandon those that permit themselves to be hardened by covetousness and pride of the *Grandeurs* of this World; and that are so cruel to treat their own Brethren more rigidly than they do the very Beasts they make use of for their Vanity. If God will one day call a Christian to account for an idle word; what account will he demand of the idle Expences of the most part of the Great ones, and of all the Abuses committed in the administration of the Estate he has given them? For the Estate which God bestows is no longer his to whom he gives it, when he has taken what is needful and seemly,

seemly for his Quality : It is the Poors when the Poor are in want. This is the reason why the Prophet calls Alms a piece of Justice, not Mercy : *He distributed,* says he, *what he had to the poor, the memory of his justice remaineth for ever.* You possess not your Goods as soon as you are a Christian, but to distribute them. Give little if you have but little ; but give much if you have much. For what greater Inheritance can a Father leave his Children, then the Protection of *Jesus Christ* ; whom he has succoured in the Necessitous that had recourse to his assistance.

Happy he that comprehends this Mystery ! it is a Secret unknown to earthly Souls, that dream not what advantage it is to regard the wants of the Necessitous out of the sincere Motive of Christian Charity. Happy he I say that understands it ! He starts not back at this ignominious out-side, nor at the miserable condition of the Poor ; because he beholds *Jesus Christ* conceal'd under that mean Aspect, and these Rags : He minds not the poorness of his Clothes ; he considers the price of his Soul. That ulcerous Body in tatter'd Garments appears to him not unworthy his assistance ; for he is favourably look'd on by Heaven from the Minute he is truly poor : so he  
receives



receives him as an Embassador sent from God to treat of Peace with him, and mediate the Affair of his Salvation: He hopes the Alms he gives him will be the cause of his Predestination, and source of his Glory. Behold what a Christian ought to comprehend, when he sees a poor Body: and once again, happy he that comprehends it. If we then are truly Christians, as we glory to be; let us follow this admirable counsel *S. Paul* gave to the *Colossians*, to raise them up to the height of that Spirit he inspir'd into them, conformable to the Image he had traced forth to them of the *New Man* he Preach'd to them: *Put you on therefore as the elect of God*, (that is, as Christians) *put you on*, says he, *the bowels of mercy, benignity, modesty, patience, supporting one one another, and pardoning one another, as also our Lord hath pardoned you*. Our Redeemer, wholly clad as he is with our frailty, teaches us to pardon our Enemies, by his pardoning us who are his. We are so nice, we cannot bear with those that do us the least Offence; and yet we boast we are Disciples of a God who pardons his Executioners, dies for those that crucifi'd him, and who in spite of our Ingratitude, continues to shewre down upon us his Favours, and the continual marks of his Bounty.

I do.

I do not bid you quit your Estates like the first Christians, who went and laid them at the Apostles feet. I do not say to you, Go affront Tyrants, like the Martyrs, to make an eminent Profession of your Faith. I say not, Retire your self into the Wilderness, to lead a penitent Life like the *Anchorites*: Sell your Liberties, as St. *Paulinus* did; Or cross the Seas like St. *Xaverius*; though God deserves all this and more from you. I do not propose unto you the Lives of the Primitive Christians, as the most holy Model, and true Rule of Evangelical perfection. I only say to you, Do not tear in pieces your Brothers Reputation; Pardon this Enemy, relieve this poor Man, this is sufficient for you. I do not say to you, Save so many Souls that perish; I only say, Save your self: your Soul is your next Neighbour, lose it not. Love those you are to live with; but love them with a pure and sincere Charity, which neither your own Interests nor the Artifice of Men may ever alter: that the Unity of spirit which ought to be among the Faithful may not be prejudiced.

Let us leave Spiritual Fathers to invent new Methods of Devotion, to satisfy the humour of the Age that pretends so much  
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to Curiosity. Let us bluntly stop at the practice of this Vertue, without seeking after any perfecter way to go to God: since neither *St. Paul*, *St. John*, nor the Gospel it self have ever own'd a better.

In fine, let us be Charitable if we pretend to be Christians, since Charity is the true Spirit of Christianity.

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F I N I S.

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